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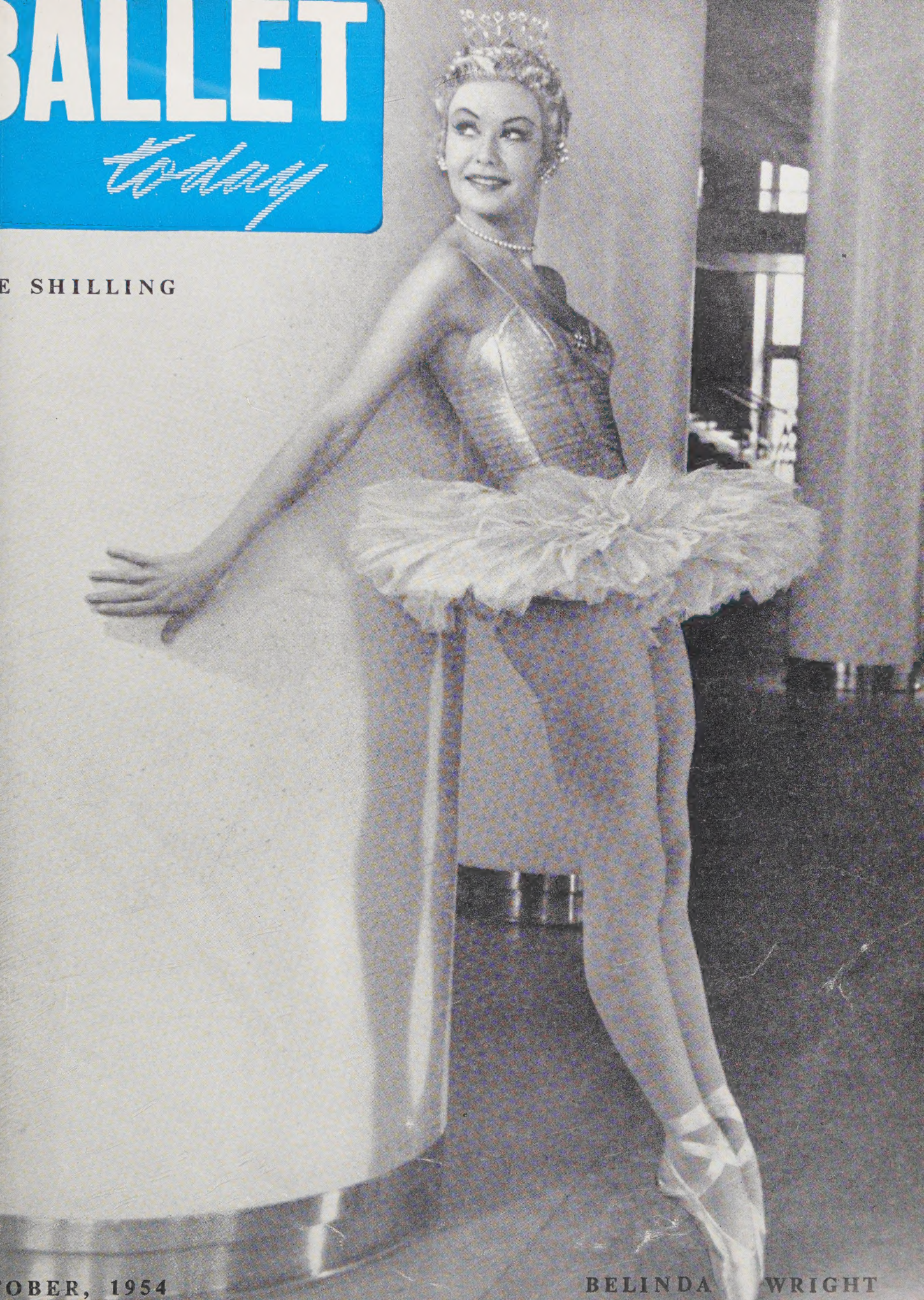

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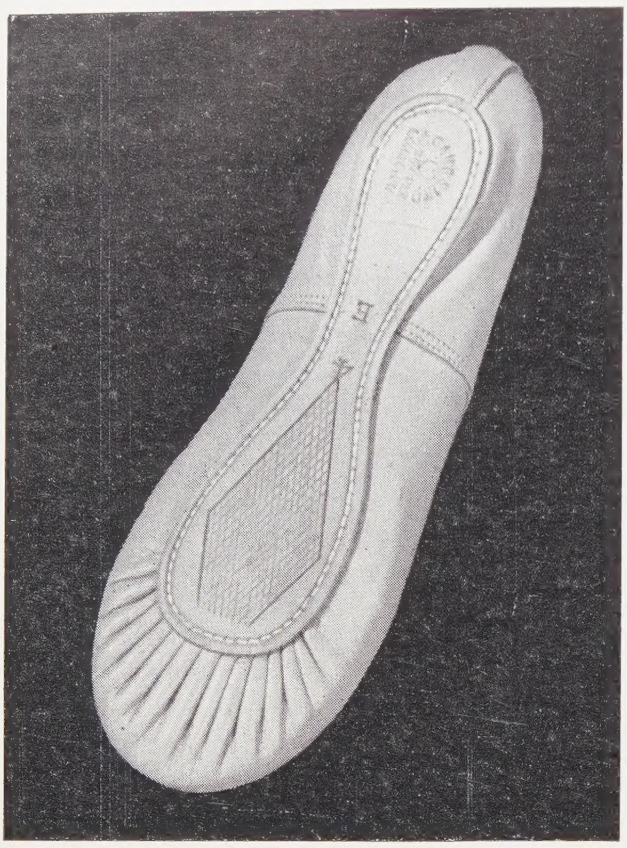

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EDITOR :
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Managing Editor : I. E Herf, Publishing and Advertising address: 15, *Upper Brighton Road, Surbiton, Surrey* (*Elmbridge 9743*). *Annual Subscription*15/-.

Milorad Miskovitch (*Photo : Mike Davis*)

Preview

'BIG SERGE'—devoted to the new—might well smile at his commemorators' devotion to the old. How sad to try pinning down a legend, a quarter century late. The costumes we think of as magnificent are pictured in their tawdry poorness, the list of creations peter sadly towards the end with mere novelty gimmicks.

"So this was Diaghilev ?" the new tens of thousands must query. And the legend is pricked, like a balloon pawed by too many hands.

What Diaghilev did for ballet was not a permanent, preservable thing. It was not like a great painting whose canvas can be varnished, cleaned. Not a great composition that can be notated, recorded. Not anything which can be deep-freezed by the years, let alone by memory.

Diaghilev pioneered ballet as we know it, he secured for ballet recognition as important art. His work was to take the dance from out of musty corners and small salons, and present it to the huge public which his worldwide touring schedule could muster.

THE TRAGEDY IS THAT THOSE WHO PRETEND COMMEMORATION OF THE MAN ARE THE VERY PEOPLE WHO ARE SABOTAGING HIS WHOLE ARTISTIC AMBITION.

Little Serge

IDEAL MISSED

Their memories are private, their legend a gossip's figure of personal reminiscences.

Diaghilev, artistically, was ruined by the disciples he gathered around himself towards the end. Today his disciples are still demolishing. Their wistful, wilful harkings—back to the myth of the 'good old days' is precisely the suicidal reaction which Diaghilev set out to eliminate.

He succeeded. But his memory, perverted by his "disciples", has lost.

What posterity has missed through this submersion of the Diaghilev ideal under the Diaghilev memory is not simple to classify.

TODAY

Today ballet needs, desperately needs, another, greater Diaghilev. A Diaghilev without the quirks which maimed Serge. What ballet does not need—and desperate, too, is the urgency of ridding us of it—are the parasites, the clingers-on to a memory of past greatness.

Ballet must be great today. On stage. Not in museums. Was not this thinking the very ideal which made Diaghilev great.

THE WELLS

The dispute at Sadlers Wells Theatre was settled on August 26. And settled none too well. But the whole sorry business is fully discussed on another page.

Here I would like to quote a few of the characteristic, eye-opening (if opening be needed) statements made during the management's press conference. If I do not quote them, neither of my rivals will.

And I, perhaps suggestively, was not invited to the press conference ! A company spokesman later told me I had been telephoned and found unavailable. How odd that Equity always found me. Or is it ?

With this portrait study of Milorad Miskovitch we begin a new series of photographs especially taken for BALLET TODAY by Mike Davis.

On the cover Mike Davis is again represented. This study of Belinda Wright was posed at Festival Hall during Festival Ballet's season. Belinda is in Snow Queen (Casse) costume.

She has now left the company but intends rejoining them after the American tour of some forty cities. This Festival tour is one of the largest yet attempted by a dance company in the United States, ending next February with a New York Season.

A MAGNIFICENT FIREBIRD

Ballet in Review
by
PETER CRAIG-RAYMOND

IN FIREBIRD, Sadlers Wells Ballet have a production which should never lapse from the repertoire. Splendidly staged, magnificently produced, and danced with greatness by Margot Fonteyn as the Firebird and Svetlana Beriosova as Tsarvena, this is by far the best contemporary production.

Originally produced in 1910 at the Paris Opera by Michel Fokine for Diaghilev, Fokine himself danced the prince with Tamara Karsavina as the Firebird and Vera Fokina as the princess.

The only other recent productions were for Ballet Theatre, quickly dropped, and by Balanchine for his New York City Ballet with Maria Tallchief and Pat McBride.

Principally, Firebird has been carried over the years on the strength of its score, by Igor Strawinski. One of the few perfect ballet scores ever written, it has been performed in concert versions a hundred times for every single ballet performance staged.

TRELLIS NIGHT

The curtain rises on a trellis-work night, only the golden fruit tree glowing translucently red in the centre. It is a stage of midnight blue, beautifully conceived. The Firebird enters, circling the tree with as near to a floating motion as I have seen, plunged in a warm red spot. The prince captures her, releasing his prize only after she has given him a magic feather.

The scene dissolves and Tsarvena leads her maidens out to dance. Meeting the prince she conveys a gentle, untouching first feeling of love. Tsarvena warns the prince of Kostchei, a magician who turns victims to stone, but he is eventually caught by Kostchei's weird army. Invoking the Firebird's aid, she swoops in and forces the magician's entourage to dance themselves into exhaustion. She then leads the prince to a huge casket which contains the legendary "immortal" soul of Kostchei. Taking the egg-bound soul out of the casket, the prince thrusts it to the ground and smashes it to pieces.

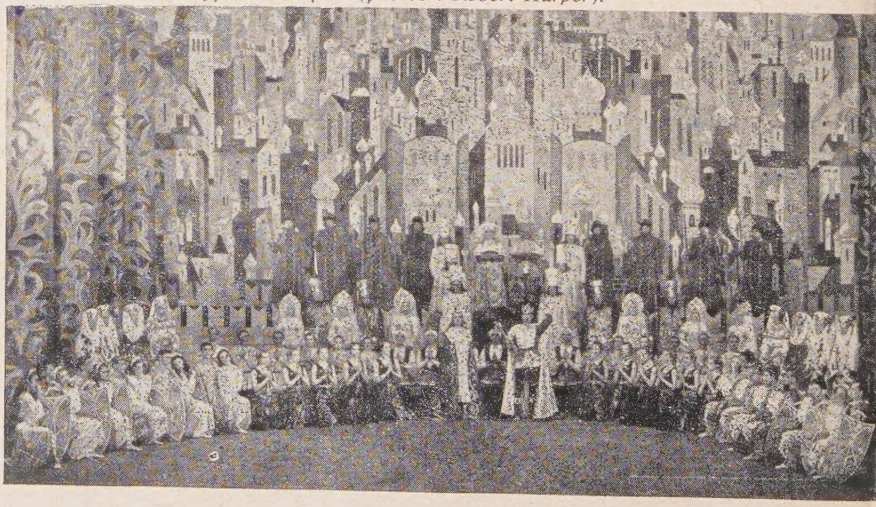
The magician dies, and all his victims are returned to their natural state. The finale of the ballet is the mmamoth oriental ceremony of allegiance—and for the marriage of the prince and princess.

FOLK TALES

A weave of folktales, as a ballet the work is dependent

—To Page Twenty

Margot Fonetyn as the Firebird



above : Svetlana Beriosova and Michael Somes, as the princess and prince, meet in the foreground of the magic fruit tree.
below : the final tableau with its elongated condensations of the minaret-type housetops. (photos : Robert Harper).

Gautier's Spectre

NORA KOVACH and Istvan Rabovsky danced *Le Spectre de la Rose* at Festival Hall on August 18. Fokine created the role of le Spectre expressely for, and governed by, Nijinski's elevation. As few Nijinskis have existed, the short ballet has languished like a three-d film shown flat.

Rabovsky then, to continue a bad analogy, is a CinemaScope Spectre. Here is not mere elevation, but a breadth of feeling projected by a dancer who is part poet, part athlete, wholly balletic.

FINEST

As danced by Rabovsky and Kovach, *Le Spectre* is one of the finest of the Fokine ballets. Perhaps the most integrated and sustained of all. With these dancers it reclaims its place as a major work, rather than as the quick-change sandwich it hasbeen for years.

Admittedly the interpretation has been changed (together with the choreography, to some extent). Kovach is not a demure teenager of the 1840s, but a warmly human and contemporary young girl. This exemplifies what the classics-archivist misses. He feels it an assault upon his classic if a modern approach is made to the roles, whilst they remain integral to the work.

MODULATED

Is this so ? Surely a classic is a work which can be modulated according to the movement of time, and yet remain a great work ? To keep *Spectre* in a museum because Karsavina and Nijinski can no longer dance their roles would be nonsense. To expect a young girl, born twenty years ago, to adjust her mind and attitudes to the limitations obviously imposed upon a dancer taking the role in 1911 is equally nonsense.

Fokine might today join with the archivists. I doubt it. But certainly Gautier would have been with the dancers. That I cannot doubt.

Portrait By June Ryan

The Giselle of Mary Munro

A Toumanova Giselle is one anticipation to relish. To arrive at Festival-hall and find Mary Munro dancing in her place is yet more. Mary, for so long a Rambert soloist, must have begun wondering just when the essential break would come. The chance which would take her to the heights.

The ankle injury of Toumanova's (fortunately soon better), the rushed invitation of Anton Dolin, the "yes, do it" of Rambert . . . . . and she had her chance.

The crammed house cheered her as if they exulted in her triumph. The calls became countless.

The excitement over, was it a good performance ?

The first act was not, in fact, very good. Mary Munro is not a young, happy dancer. She is, perhaps, ballet's only young tragedienne. So the second act, I promised myself, would be hers. Hers ? It was one of the finest second act Giselles I have ever seen. Moving, real, breathtaking and superbly danced. John Gilpin, moved perhaps by his partner, danced magnificently.

Festival Ballet Season—2

The Reprieved Esmeralda

ESMERALDA will never become a great ballet. It will never be the star attraction which Festival had planned. But, as it is pruned and reshaped, it does become a better, tighter work.

In the July 12 version Nora Kovach and Istvan Rabovsky danced the principal roles. Kovach has more to do and she now brings a more controlled power to the role, rather than the under-rehearsed "go it alone" temperament which carried her through at first. As I said last month, it was one of the ballet's basic flaws that Esmeralda herself was diffused. Kovach fought wildly to establish her role as the dramatic continuity the work urgently demanded. She now has the role much more in shape and Beriosoff has heightened her effects.

Rabovsky, dancing no less than before, has improved considerably in stage "look" and holding. It is an amazing contradiction that this dancer, unmatched when dancing, can fade when he has no actual dancing to do. In this *Esmeralda* it was clear that he had realized this and set out to produce a stage presence compatible with his dancing effect. He looked much better, stronger. And commanded the stage as he must.

PLOT

The plot changes now have *Esmeralda* living for the finale, instead of dangling melodramatically from an amber-lit noose. The bedroom scene has been cut and its action rearranged for a tavern (adaptable music, this !) *Esmeralda's* first solo has been built and the camel dance in the finale has been replaced by a grand pas de deux the actual pace of which I was restrain of from guessing by the efforts ed the conductor. Twice in one week this conductor has managed almost inconceivable effects with his timing.

Esmeralda and its type were better left as relics of the pre-Fokine/Diaghilev revolution. But if it had to be revived—and it has been—then this tightening by Beriosoff is wielding it into far better shape.

But this is no way to make a ballet. The appocrypha is by now too full.

Nora Kovach as Odette

THE first performance of Lac des Cygnes, act one, with Nora Kovach and Istvan Rabovsky, was a surprising one. The Odette of Kovach was, in part, one of the most beautiful portrayals I have seen. And, incredibly, one of the most lugubrious and unplanned.

In the grand pas de deux Kovach slowed almost to a halt, but a swaying, inturned-thoughtful halt. In the slower passages she had a quality of "unmoving" movement which caught the character of Odette perfectly. This, with controlled strength, promised a portrayal of new meaning.

Sadly the promise was only partly fulfilled.

CARELESS

The first flaw was a, not so much poor, as hurriedly careless series of port de bras. These wrecked the beautiful poise of her strong pointes. Her exits, with ugly arm poses, where another easily corrected fault.

But the principal disapointment was in the series of front lifts in which she comes down in plie. Here balance and rhythm were lost entirely and the whole passage was performed both too quickly and without any visual thought whatsoever. I was also surprised to see Kovach take a normally en pointe (or, at least, demi-pointe) movement a terre.

These flaws, small enough, ruined what could well have been a beautiful *Odette*.

Obviously Kovach's *Odette*, at the moment, is a mixture of three things : taught mannerisms, choreographically new ideas, and the embryo glimmer of a personal conception of the role which should develop until her *Odette* becomes a completely self-inspired and intriguing portrayal.

One example of this was in the final movement towards Rothbart. She did not "unwillingly go" but appeared to be impelled by an almost visible magnetism emitting from Rothbart. Her tensed, drawn movement was, I thought, a superb thinking of the character's possibilities.

Given time, this *Odette* should make a few new points of its own and become a superb portrait.

Ishtany . . . Kibirultum!*

THE press were not invited to witness Istvan Rabovsky and Nora Kovach in Scheherazade at Festival Hall on August 16. Perhaps, the ballet press being what it sadly is, the shock of this *Scheherazade* would have been too enormous.

Certainly it is the most sensual, erotic *Scheherazade* staged in my time. It is also the finest.

This onetime 'succes de scandale' has withered from the voluptuous to the vapid, from the abandoned to the acerebral. To watch Rabovsky and Kovach was to see the ballet's centre for what it must be. *Acharnement*, no common quality in contemporary dance, is essential for *Scheherazade*. Here, for the first time in my experience, it was achieved.

VIRGINAL GHOST

One could ignore the chaste harem, the somewhat dowdy feel of the stage, and be impelled to watch only Zobeide and the Slave as they made of *Scheherazade* their finest ballet, and revived what has been a virginal ghost for all these years.

Kovach, of course, has few rivals to fear. To try portraying Zobeide with a few frosted port de bras a la Maestro Cecchetti and some ballet school mime—this is what we have had. Hovah uses her whole body. She writhes with passion, strains muscles backwards to relax her love . . . . . "too much sex" four people told me within half an hour. Too much sex ? For a harem queen and an imprisoned young slave. How ?

ANIMAL FRENZY

Rabovsky slips from couch to leading the slaves, from furious displays of his own temperamental dancing to an animal frenzy of passion.

Those who saw this *Scheherazade*—and well over 12,000 did, at Festival Hall—saw the ballet perhaps for the tenth or hundredth time. But they saw the lovers, the reality of the ballet, for the first time.

A mighty divergence from Fokine. Sadly, for Fokine.

* *Hungarian for "wonderful—very wonderful".*
The photograph of Kovach as Zobeide is by Mike Davis.

FOR DANCERS

a monthly column by

Violetta Elvin

IT IS certainly not usual for a ballerina to write a monthly column in a popular magazine. And when the Editor of BALLET TODAY first asked whether I would be interested to do so, I must confess the idea did not appeal to me at once.

I certainly could not see myself joining the distinguished writers in these pages whose task it is to praise or condemn and to set apart the good from the bad in our world of ballet. Nor did historical or biographical notes on, say, my early training in Russia awaken any particular enthusiasm in me. But I was finally persuaded that there was something very close to my heart, something which seldom gets enough attention but which should be brought before the growing audience for ballet.

I am thinking mainly of all the little queries and problems put forward so often in letters reaching me from fans and found also in readers' letters sent to this and other dancing journals. I felt that here was something I would enjoy writing about very much.

"TAKEN ABACK"

I have been frequently asked, and sometimes by people of considerable dancing talent, what future there actually was in ballet, and whether I would seriously advise anyone taking up classical dancing as a career.

Frankly, I have always been taken aback by this type of question.

When I began with ballet I did it because I was a child in love with the dance. I remember that then nothing in the world mattered anything to me compared with my wish to someday be on the stage and to dance at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, the theatre I first joined before coming to England.

At that time I never considered the future, I was wildly, often unreasonably, prejudiced for ballet and I wanted to succeed whatever the cost. My love for dancing was never anything I wanted to reason or speculate about, it was a part of me and I obeyed its commands without question.

This something within me drove me on and finally made me a dancer.

This the first article in an exclusive series to be written for BALLET TODAY by Sadlers Wells ballerina Violetta Elvin. She will, each month, give a personal answer to questions affecting dancers—especially young dancers. These articles should also be of absorbing interest to parents, teachers, and every reader.

This is the first time that a current ballerina has regularly written for a magazine, and Violetta Elvin is—I think—the perfect choice. Young, eagerly stretching the traditional bounds of ballet to find new, broader outlets and gain greater experience—she has won a huge following very quickly and assured herself of a considerable status in ballet.

"AN IDEALIST"

I know that a true artist must be an idealist at least about one thing : his or her art. Take away this idealism in the creation or expression of any form of art and I doubt if anyone can find much of value in it.

To those who really love to dance I appeal to try their all, to give themselves to it entirely without doubt or hesitation. Dancing can never be just a job.

Why Did

Refuse to Publish This?

●The following letter was sent to the "Letters" column of the Sunday Times—for which newspaper Mr. Cyril Beaumont is ballet critic—on August 2.

Sketch By June Ryan

THE SUNDAY TIMES

ESTABLISHED 1822

KEMSLEY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.1

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5th August, 1954.

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●*The issue which lacked the space for this letter, published letters on the following topics : The law in* 1066, *cost of food in Edinburgh, the Summer of* 1594, *Pilgrim's Progress, Yacht racing, Favourite verse, the year* 1484, *Moonrakers, Draught cider* ("*do others share my recoil from this disgusting 'washed down with draught cider'* "), *Wlm. Harrison* —1534 *to* 93, *Atticus and "What is the meaning of the phrase—a chip on his shoulder—*".

The Sunday Times, in common with the other "quality Sundays" and dailies, has long been in the forefront of condemning the gutter press. On two occasions this year I have corrected the "gutter press". Both letters were printed immediately.

On this occasion, correcting a "quality" newspaper, the letter was completely rejected in favour of those on topics listed above.

"NOT ONLY is Mr Cyril Beaumont ethically wrong in his review of Istvan Rabovsky's performance as the Chief Warrior in Borodin's Prince Igor dances, but he uses a point which can be even better used against himself.

To say of Rabovsky that "certain (of his) steps appeared to diverge from Fokine's choreography" is to beg the vulgarism "so what ?" These dances are choreographed by Nicholas Bee riosoff who "reproduced" Fokin-

But is there any reason why a dancer who was not even alive when Fokine's choreography was staged—in 1909—should not "diverge" by using a technical prowess and improved technique obviously impossible nearly half-a-century ago ?

But apart from this. Fokine's choreography "diverged"—and far more so—from Nicholas Legat's choreography for the Imperial ballet in Moscow many years before.

Where does Mr Beaumont go from here ? It is surely no critical criteria to attack the new on what was one's own first experience. Especially if that first experience was a mere variant on an original itself ?"

A NEW ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF BALLET

Serge Lifar, Christiane Vaussard, Michel Renault and Claude Bessy taking a curtain call at the Festival (*Photo: Brun*)

—IN AIX LES BAINS

THIS year's ballet season in Paris has been somewhat disappointing as there have not been any big creations at the Opera nor any visiting companies from abroad. The only important presentation which was to have been made was the Soviet Ballet, which unfortunately failed to materialise for reasons well known to everyone.

However, one gathered with a certain amount of curiosity and interest, that the idea of the International Dance Festival, which took place at Aix les Bains, from 31st July to 8th August originated with the young composer Jacques Porte and was carried out by Robert Barrier, deputy Mayor of Aix les Bains.

Many musical and cinema festivals take place in Europe today but that at Aix les Bains was the first to be entirely consecrated to dancing.

Is it not therefore in keeping that on the borders of the Lac du Bourget, near Tresserves, that Saint Saens conceived his musical work *Le Cygne*, which later became *La Mort du Cygne*, immortalised by Anna Pavlowa who frequently came to this spot to rest before making her triumphal flights around the world

FIRE BIRD

It was also in front of Mt. Revard, overlooking the lake, that on a summer evening in the setting sun Nijinski, who was then at the height of his glory, expressed his wonderment to Serge Diaghilev, saying—"Leon Bakst could not have found a more magnificent decor for the *Fire Bird*."

In spite of all this we had doubts as to whether the festival would be successful, as even the townspeople felt uncertain, but our doubts were dissipated on the first night. On entering the Parc Theatre of the Grand Casino we found that the 3,500 seats were fully occupied by a most elegant crowd.

The corps de ballet of the Theatre Nationale de L'Opera occupied the immense stage, which had for its only decoration the trees and flowerbeds of the park which were cleverly illuminated. With the opera's classical choreographic repertory, Serge Lifar reserved for this occasion his masterpiece *Les pas et les Lignes* to the music of Debussy's Petite Suite.

Although not showing any particular intellectual effort, this ballet gave an impression of the choreographer's genius by its inspired freshness. This ballet was presented by the star dancer of the opera, Michel Renault, with the premiere danseuse, Claude Bessy. Michel Renault is actually the greatest French dancer in whom beauty and strength make a superb combination, and the same applies to Claude Bessy with her light and harmonious movements. Her technique is impeccable and her grace and timing are without ostentation.

L'OISEAU BLEU

The second evening took place at the Theatre de Plein Air des Thermes with 4,000 seats entirely occupied. Lifar is here the unequalled artist. In his *pas de quatre* to music by Tchaikowski, which he presented on this occasion, he danced with Michel Renault, Nina Vyroubova and Madeleine Lafont. The steps and movements were danced with ease and without evidencing the faintest effort, the timing being particularly well balanced.

On the other hand the star Christiane Vaussard, who always seems to show a certain reserve on the Opera stage, offered us a magnificent *Lac des Cygnes* with great beauty, and, above all, a ravishing *L'Oiseau Bleu*, by the side of Michel Renault, with marvellous leaps.

We also saw the stars Lyane Dayde, and Max Bozzoni and a part of the corps de ballet came with the Philharmonic Orchestra from Lyons directed by Richard Blareau. The Festival continued the presentation of the Ballets Choeurs Basque Etorki, which was animated by the faith and dignity of Philippe Oyanburu.

A curious school, this Basque dancing, with its steps and figures which so much resemble the classical dance.

Later we saw the classical Hindu dancer, Radha Sri Ram, who was the heroine in Jean Renoir's film *The River*. We also had a remarkable presentation by the coloured artists in their dances from Iriguayan Native dances, danced by Paul d'Arnot and his partner, Raymonde Lombardin accompanied by the Argentine singers, Leda and Maria, who, playing both the guitar and the Caja, interpretated a series of popular melodies in perfect style.

DANCE-PICTURE

We also saw the Japanese Troupe, star dancer being Meho Hanayaguy, who had attained such success at the Theatre Marigny the last few months. These dancers, renowned for their subtle gestures, exquisite costumes, and lightness of foot as the spring breezes which take off the blossoms of the cherry trees . . .indeed a stride in the evolution of theatrical tradition. A complete contrast was the Swedish dancer Birgit Akesson, called the Picasso of choreography.

Indeed, Akesson evokes the most modern music to frame her dance-picture creations in modern idiom. In the theatre diverse opinions are held regarding this dancer, the public are mainly for her.

AMSTERDAM

One of the most unexpected presentations was the reservation of two evenings for the corps de ballet of the Amsterdam Royal Opera, which was formed after three years of hard work by the French dancer and choreographer Francoise Adred.

The history of their birth is indeed interesting ; it was in June 1951 that Francoise Andred had her first contact with the Ballet de l'Opera Royale at the Holland Festival. At that time, she was directing a charming ballet entitled *Billard* and the success was such that the directors of the Opera engaged her as Dance Directress in March 1952. In April of the same year, the Ballet made their first appearance at the Amsterdam Opera.

Their success was so great that the presentation was repeated six times that season. At the end of 1952, the Royal Ballet of the Opera at Amsterdam gave a presentation at Monte Carlo with the same success. A similar success was obtained in 1953 at the Dutch Festival. We have seen Francoise Andret's group reconstructed at this International Festival at Aix les Bains, with new creations such as *Le Reve de Veronique* to music by Aram Katchachourian, with costumes and decor by the artist Bouchene ; also *Le Canape* to music by the composer Juria Andriessen, with costumes and decor by Nicholas Winiberg.

CHAUVIRE

The end of the Festival was made remarkable by the appearance of Yvette Chauvire, who danced *Le Cygne* de Saint Saens, and *Aria* by J. S. Bach (Choreography by Serge Lifar).

At this Festival, we saw an important exhibition of painting and sculpture dedicated to dancing in the halls of the Casino. A series of elegant receptions were given.

The Festival was closed on the 8th August in the presence of the deputy Mayor of the town, M. Barrier, who presented to the town of Aix a flag from the Courtoise Francaise. We have a rendezvous next year for the second International Festival in view of the magnificant success achieved this year.

F. REYNA

ROSEMARY LINDSAY . .

is on the cover of BALLET TODAY for November—on sale October 25. Inside a double-sized "Ballet in Review" section covers in full the Paris Opera Ballet season at Covent Garden; Violetta Elvin writes another article in her unique series; Caryl Brahms spotlights a third company, and Belinda Wright is intriguingly portrayed by June Ryan, with two commentaries. A photofeature on the Royal Helsinki Ballet, and a photo-interview with Violette Verdy are also starred features in this superb issue.

Milhaud, Prokofiev, Strawinski

discs

IT IS a long way back to de Valois' *La Creation du Monde* to Milhaud's music, but here it is by Les Concerts de Chambre under Fernand Oubradous' baton. It is presented by Felsted, a new division of Decca, on L89002. This first sample has a quiet surface and is well recorded, so that I hope we may look forward to many good and interesting French recordings, in which this new division will specialise. The reverse side includes *La Cheminee du Roi Rene* and *Saudades Do Brazil*—thus a wide span of this composer's style and range is usefully covered for those not too well acquainted with Milhaud.

Le Chout, by his contemporary, Prokofiev, was commissioned by Diaghilev who, by then, had launched into his modern period—this work being considered very modern. It was in fact, typical of the kind of music to which the Soviet objected and the cause of their refusal to permit the composer to return to his native Russia for many years. This ballet by Strawinski is based on an old Russian folk tale about a buffoon. Its first performances in 1921, with the English girl, Hilda Munnings (Lydia Sokolova), as the Buffoon's wife, were an enormous success but, strangely, it did not remain in the repertory. De Basil revived the ballet but its witty music is of limited appeal and it could not stay the course. Golschmann's rendering on Capitol CTL 7062 is most effective but he is inclined to hurry unnecessarily the three dances from *Tricorne*, on the other side.

From threre we go on to *Sacre du Printemps*, Capitol CTL 7061—another Diaghilev sensation. William Steinberg with the Pittsburg Symphony Orchestra, gives a very good performance but even so one has to point out that he does not approach the feeling of Markevitch, HMV. CLP 1003, nor his phrasing and ability to bring out the orchestral colour in a work of this nature, which otherwise can quickly become meaningless.

A CHANGE OF DYNASTY

BY CARYL BRAHMS

LIKE royalty on unofficial embassage abroad, resonantly heralded, glittering, Sadlers' Wells sets forth for America, or Paris, or, it might be Milan. Or, continental commitments permitting, it might go North to shine out for the Edinburgh Festival. At intervals it flashes through the Provinces.

Then it comes back to Covent Garden, which is its home, a little travel-weary, to give the best it can. And London audiences are not entirely to blame if they are beginning to feel that to their national ballet they are something of an anti-climax.

The Company dances sedately.

DREARY

The repertory inclines to ballets that are rather long, rather threadbare. They appear to have embarked upon a dreary policy of neo-romantic three act ballets, that strain the invention of their hard-worked choreographers. Unlike America, there is a famine of choreographers in this country. And it is in our national ballet that the leanness is most apparent. But so far as I know we are making no great effort to find, found and present new choreographers.

We do not apprentice young dance designers to Balanchine, for instance, or to Petit, (when he is operative) or Jerome Robbins, where they might broaden their outlook and enrich their vocabulary of dance-invention. In Ashton we have a master choreographer of the first order—and, when they do not flog him to death, of a ready invention. Cranko, still obsessed with masques and dominos, is being given great opportunities to develop in both companies.

But their crying need is new choreographers quickly and at all costs, as Madame de Valois must be the first to recognise.

DISCOURSE

At the head of the company is exquisite Fonteyn. Accomplished, musicianly, unique. To watch her phrasing of the dance—the manner in which she emphasises one movement by throwing away another—is to overhear a very distinguished discourse between a great artist and her art.

Supporting her are two enchanting ballerinas ; Elvin and Beriosova.

Elvin's *Swan Lake* offers us one of the great experiences in this generation of our dancing days. But of late this handsome and responsive ballerina has seemed to lose the aloof purity of classical ballet by overstressing other aspects of her femininity. But she is a fascinating artist to watch, and I would never willingly miss her *Sleeping Princess* or *Ballet Imperial* when she is on form.

Watching lovely Beriosova develop with every role she is given along the lines of the authentic international ballerina has been enthralling, too. Here is an artist who has much to say ; one who may end by being the next Wells Assoluta.

Beryl Grey, a veteran dancer before her years, comes back to dance with the company this autumn. An able and mature artist, she should have some ballets created for her that could use her stature and her generosity.

Ballerinas Nerina and Jackson incline to the prissy-missy. Nerina, a stout technician, is a little overawed by her responsibilities, but she may yet regain that joy of dancing that so endeared her to us when first she was a soloist. Jackson, relentlessly technical, is conscientious but distressingly arch. So much for the distaff cast.

The men are led by Somes, a sound but unexciting *danceur noble*, and greatly enriched by Alexander Grant, and Brian Shaw.

CHANGE ?

What would a change of dynasty mean to the Wells ?

If Margot Fonteyn should, for any reason, retire during the next five years—marriage might claim her, for instance ; or she might suddenly find herself bored by her World Assoluta-dom and elect to play Lady Macbeth on the widies—what would the Wells do then ?

It would be a situation not without precedent. When Markova left the Wells, Fonteyn was found. When Helpmann, who had been the company's star attraction throughout the war years, left it, Fonteyn flowered, and when finally the ballet went to the Royal Opera House authority crowned her art.

Who will inherit her Assoluta dom should she abandon it year after year after year after next ?

Not Elvin. She is the hybrid in the conservatory. And, too, her technique is apt to betray her on high occasions.

Possibly Beriosova, if she works hard enough—which she will—and stays with the company.

There will certainly be an attempt to bring in Fifield. But delightful artist though she is, spirited, musicianly and accomplished to my mind she lacks the bones and weight of tragedy.

ORPHANS

And what if Valois should, during the next five years, relinquish ?

Who would run the orphaned Wells ?

The popular theory is Fonteyn and Ashton co-heading a benevolent committee of Michael Somes, Robert Irving and David Webster, the diplomatic Artistic Administrator of the Covent Garden Trust, who has done so much to build up the Opera at this house.

My personal opinion is that the result would be chaos. But then, after the iron hand in the iron glove of de Valois there is bound to be something in the nature of a deluge, for a while.

Five years is not too long a time to find three new choreographers, a Ballerina Assoluta and a Director, and this should leave them pretty busy back stage of the Garden.

So let me relieve them of one chore at least. If they want the name of the most promising new conductor of Ballet I have heard for many years, my number's in the telephone book and I will be glad to give their music department further information as to where they can hear him, before the Opera snaps him up.

A SECOND VIEW OF GISELLE

Two Studies by JAY NORMAN

BY the time that the spirit of the Romantic movement, which gave birth to 'Trilby' and "The Mysteries of Udolpho", reached the ballet it was already in decline and its effect on the ballet was further lessened by the already degenerate state of that art. The balletomane was interested only in the danseuse who, while she could certainly be frail, doomed and ethereal, could also be voluptuous, and there was no room for the virile hero.

The ballet had to be pretty, even if faintly tinged with melancholy ; it could not be a scene for skulls, monsters and Svengalis.

Although a production of "Giselle" in which the darker side of Romanticism was heavily stressed would undoubtedly be out of harmony with the spirit of the Romantic ballet, it would be interesting to see a production in which the supernatural element was more prominent than is usual at the present time, especially in the second act, as this would not only raise the tension of the act but also narrow the gap between the conception of Wilis and sudden death and the "moonlight and muslin" aspect beloved of the mid-nineteenth century balletomane. The melodramatic music would lend itself very well to this kind of treatment.

In this imaginary production the corps de ballet would have a pale, ghostly make-up, glittering eyes, and a cold, impersonal quality of movement. They would dance Hilarion to his death with non-human relentlessness under the unflinching gaze of their Queen. The manner of Hilarion's death and the Queen's rejection of Giselle's and Albrecht's appeal for mercy would send shivers down our spines. True to the legend that created them the Wilis would long since have passed beyond human compassion and would only delight in the moonlight hunting of their prey. This would give Myrtha an opportunity for displaying considerable dramatic as well as dancing powers, for a more dramatic conception would not then be as it sometimes tends to be in present productions, a little out of touch with the rest of the Wilis. She would appear quite at ease with a small circlet of flowers on her head and clad in flimsier but still conventional costume. This conception of the second act would also heighten the contrast between the Wilis and Giselle, a novice, for she is the only one who still has earthly connections and traces of human pity.

If it is true that an interpretation of the title role should fit perfectly into a production, then it would seem that most contemporary productions, based as they are on the French originals, require a Markova as Giselle. When we speak of the ideal Giselle we mean the re-creation of the part as we imagine it portrayed at the Paris Opera in the middle of the last century. Markova's interpretation, in no sense naturalistic, is strictly a ballet period piece, a lithograph come to two dimensional life before our eyes, the frail, Romantic heroine transposed into the village maiden and ethereal-ised.

A more supernatural, dramatic production would require the touch of a Chauvire, melodramatic and full blooded, a Giselle seen through the mannered eyes of the Paris Opera.

What, then, of Fonteyn ?

Seen in the framework of contemporary productions her interpretation is not as satisfying as that of Markova, but if considered as the poetical and spiritual reverse side of Markova's portrait it is entirely acceptable, though it would fit more happily into a spiritualised setting, if such could be devised.

Her Giselle is seen inwardly, youth and joy and innocence contrasted with the spiritual tenderness of the adult soul. Is it reasonable to quibble, as we sometimes do, that one interpretation is not the other ?

Dancer by Helen Foster

TIRESIAS

OVER the past few years it has become almost a generalisation to say that whatever heights Fonteyn has reached in the big classical and romantic roles it is in those roles created for her by Ashton that she most clearly displays her rare and individual qualities—her lyricism and tenderness and her exotic feminine beauty. Even some of those who pay lip service to her Aurora as her most sublime achievement feel in their hearts that in obeying the dictates of Petipa and 'assoluta' she sheds something of her own special magic.

When Fonteyn returned from Paris some years ago with a new tautness, elevation and glamour, it was some time before she found a way of merging these modern acquisitions into the interpretation of her roles. She was given few chances of interpreting the ballerina role in *Scenes de Ballet*, though this work would appear to offer her scope for attempting such a fusion, and her role remained, for the most part, an unco-ordinated mixture of acrobatics and lyricism.

The merger began to take place in *Apparitions*, though in this ballet she is not provided with sufficient dancing opportunities for it to become apparent. Chloe, built as it is round her old style, gives her little latitude to experiment and the Queen of the Air is necessarily too formal, though here, in the new joy and excitement of her marvellously controlled dancing, one feels something of the new co-ordination.

FUSING

It has gradually become clear that "Tiresias as Woman" is a role which at last gives her the opportunity of fusing all her qualities.

Here is the old tender lyricism, the rapt, mystical mood, wedded to her comparatively new found strength, tautness and glamour. The result is perhaps Fonteyn's greatest achievement as a contemporary dancer.

Dancing At The

Alexander Grant and Anne Heaton in Le Tricorne

Edinburgh Festival

THE main feature of the dance field, which, indeed, attracted a high proportion of general interest at the Festival, was the *Homage to Diaghilev* exhibition—a commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the death of the Russian impresario, Serge Diaghilev. To the post-war ballet public, the sentiment behind such homage is not deeply moving. The historic debt that present-day ballet owes to the impresario and his collaborators is accepted. But, for the pre-war public, it conjures many visions, not least of which was one of mis-apprehension at the prospect of the revival of *The Firebird*.

On seeing the Sadlers Wells Ballet, who presented *La Boutique, The Three-Cornered Hat* and *The Firebird*, the problems in the minds of both new and older balletgoers were not resolved. Unhappily, the Empire theatre is inadequate to present a company and ballets on the scale of the Sadlers Wells Ballet. By this time, the Covent Garden stage will have rectified many of the physical handicaps. Accepting the shortcomings of the Empire, the happiest thing that struck me was the excellence of the scores for all three ballets, enhanced even further by the sensitive baton of Ernest Ansermet, who was actually guest conductor to Diaghilev 25 years ago.

RECONSTRUCTION

The Firebird is not a reconstruction of the original, nor is it a fairy-tale. Accepting that fact, which belies the impression it no doubt wishes to convey, its only connections with the original are the reproduction by Serge Grigoriev, regisseur to Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and the coaching of Fonteyn, who dances the Firebird, by its original creator, Tamara Karsavina.

There is nothing wrong in revivals, provided that the re-creators understand the elements that gave the work its original success. If this is impossible to achieve, the crime of hanging it on the head of the original parent should not be committed. In Diaghilev's production, the artists were Russians who believed utterly in their native fairy-tales. Our artists are not Russians, and they cannot, therefore, completely comprehend and interpret the essence of Russian myths. Also, it is increasingly difficult to make people today believe in fairy-tales.

The Gontcharova sets which succeeded the original ones by Golovine in 1926, are decorative, but not magical. They do not make the initial impact of plunging you right into the heart of the legend, which is vital. Michael Somes, as Prince Ivan and with not a step to dance, was a country yokel and not a regal personage, lost on a hunting expedition, overwhelmed with his fantastic surroundings.

Svetlana Beriosova stood out from her companions solely by the serenity of her bearing. She was indistinguishable by her dress.

Margot Fonteyn, while giving of her best, did not fully "get over" the poignancy of her role. Her function in the legend was not clearly defined, although after more performances, this will no doubt alter. Considered from every point, this was not as successful a Festival offering as one might have wished.

In *La Boutique Fantasque* and *The Three-Cornered Hat*, the company were well rehearsed and danced effectively. Good character sketches came from Nadina Nerina as the Can-Can dancer in *Boutique* as well as Alexis Rassine as the Snob, and Henry Legerton as the shopkeeper's assistant. Anne Heaton made an effective and sensitive Miller's Wife in the *Three-Cornered Hat*.

DIAGHILEV

It took the Diaghilev exhibition, arranged by Richard Buckle at the Royal College of Art, to show people something of the taste and artistic wealth that were synonymous with Diaghilev. This collection of designs, caricatures, posters, programmes, books, letters, and photos relating to his ballet and opera were a living example of his influence on contemporary fashion. The rooms housing the collection were intended to portray a Baroque palace and this was achieved with perceptive imagination by the Principal and students of the College.

The desired atmosphere was rounded off by relaying music from the Diaghilev ballets, arranged for the occasion by Lord Harewood, throughout the College, including an actual recital room, where the visitor could relax and listen in comfort and soft lights, contemplating the wonders he had just seen. If there was a tendency to frills and fancies for their own sakes, in the exhibition, it must be remembered that these were frequently present in the Diaghilev era, if not in the work of the great man himself.

This is an exhibition that should be available to everyone remotely interested in ballet. These are not decayed momentos of a faded past, dug up and dusted down, but very alive reminders of taste, presentation and theatrical successes. Possibly the most indicative point,—an antithesis of the splendour of Bakst, Benois, Gontcharova, Derain, Picasso and the fun of the caricatures of famous ballet personalities,—are the letters written by Diaghilev, essentially the man of his day, with an extraordinary ability for discovering and fostering talent.

In one letter, typical of any for its simplicity, he asks briefly for rehearsals to commence immediately on *Les Noces* and for *Cleopatre* to be buried for good. I wonder whether anyone will ever have the audacity to repudiate the master's wish!

OTHER EVENTS

Angelo Andes gave a three-week season at the Festival supported only by Nady Santander and a pianist, in an inadequate hall. The programme lacked the customary variety of style, but the arrangements of the items were good and the castanets have seldom sounded more evocative.

The Cygnet Ballet performed in the open air for the first week of the Festival. When will ballet dancers acknowledge that their's is first and last a theatrical art which loses its object entirely when out-of-doors ?

FILMS

A programme of dance films was given as part of the Film Festival in Edinburgh and the USSR "Trio Ballet" already seen in London was shown in a general film show. The dance film show proper included "Folk Songs And Dances Of Pakistan", a charming documentary, notable for a Kathak dance and losing something through being made in black and white and not colour, "Jazz Dance" from the U.S.A. and "Ballet Girl" from Denmark' Both these are important films.

Jazz Dance is one of the very few remarkable films of the Festival, for it is a brilliant collaboration between its producer-director, Roger Tilton, its photographer and the editor. It runs 20 minutes, and the pace is built steadily from views of jazz fans sitting around in the Central Plaza Dance Hall. New York City, to the spell-binding fury of an actual jam session.

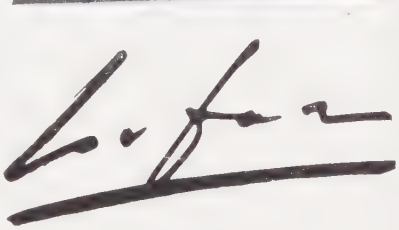
When the camera has flashed on every unusual angle of dance pattern, body contortion and

—To Page Twenty-Two

A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

by

Camille de Rhynal



TO write about a world-known personality who has been already so often praised is a difficult task, especially when this famous personality is Serge Lifar.

I think that every thing has been said about his talent as a dancer, choreographer and "choreauthor" as he called himself ! Nevertheless as I have known him since his debut in Paris, when he was in Diaghilev's ballet company, I dare to give a personal impression of the actual Director and ballet-master of the Paris Opera ballet, hoping that my opinion, sometimes too straight forward, will not shock him or his admirers.

STRIKING

Serge Lifar, is undoubtedly striking, and from the start has shown his great abilities in every sphere of ballet dancing. He has a sure knowledge of classical method as he was a pupil of Maestro Cecchetti. His physical lines were well employed and his dancing was certainly rightly admired in his young days. There is no doubt that as ballet-master he has brought to the Paris Opera new blood. Even his adversaries, and God knows how many they were at the time of the war, recognise his real talent.

This reminds me of an incident that happened in Monte-Carlo, right after the last war, when I had heard that Serge had been in the best of terms with the German Nazis. I was to report about the ballets presented at the Casino, and when he came to welcome me, I refused to shake hands with him.

An old gentleman who was sitting in the company of Yvette Chauvire, Janine Charrat and other dancers, stood up and gave me his card, showing he was an Officer of Legion d'honneur, and he gave me his word of honour that Lifar did not do anything against France, but just to keep his work of Ballet-master of the Paris Opera during the German occupation. This was confirmed by another friend of ours—his colleague and countryman Boris Kniaseff.

Though I accepted this version I wanted to be sure and it was only when another friend of mine, Robert Quinault, who was on the board of the Committee in charge of investigating the activities of some professionals during the occupation, assured me that nothing had been found against the attitude of Serge, and consequently I could still consider him as a friend.

WRONG

May I add that when Serge Lifar came to Monte-Carlo at that time, the personnel in charge of the stage, props, electricity, etc. refused to work or even raise the curtain, always on account of the rumours that Serge had been a collaborator of the Nazis. So it was through the Directors of the Casino that they had been wrongly informed.

It must have certainly been a great victory for Lifar when he returned to Monte-Carlo, the following year, but this time with a much warmer welcome from the same people.

As I have already said it is rather embarassing to speak of such a man as Serge. But I feel that I can tell here about one of my grievances. When he produced *Icare*, his personal creation, I told him that I expected to hear some music more adequate to the subject, and not an accompaniment of drums all through the ballet.

This opinion of mine was not favourably accepted, as Lifar is very much of an autocrat and does not like criticisms. He has been so much spoiled that he wouldn't like a single remark, even from his best friend. I am sorry about this, as I think that if even a child was showing me some good idea, I would take it with gratitude and should be not the least ashamed of admitting he was right !

MISTAKEN

I know that even a genius can make mistakes, but if he is honest with himself, he should admit it, otherwise he will show his megalomany and loose perhaps some of his admirers. That is probably the case with Serge Lifar as a dancer.

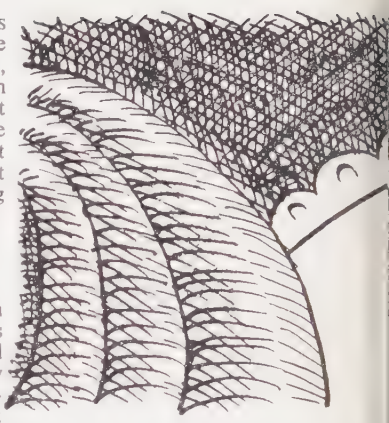
I went to see his ballet *Cinema* at the Paris Opera. I must say that I was much disappointed not only by the whole thing, but by the dancing of Lifar who could have been more efficient. I was there in the company of Alicia Markova and although she did not make any remark at all, I felt she was certainly of my opinion. This was proved by our mutual applause when the show ended with Lander's *Etudes*, which was simply some kind of bar and centre classical ballet exercise. To be honest I must add that the whole Opera, packed to capacity, gave to this last "divertissement" a terrific ovation. Twenty curtains, if I remember, were the best proof that the public prefers a well produced old classical item than a modern production badly presented.

NAUTEOS

This is proved once more by the last ballet produced by Lifar at Paris Opera, *Nauteos* a ballet which had been presented for the first time in 1947 at the Casino of Monte-Carlo. This "reprise" has not been so successful and once again I regret to say that to give public full satisfaction as well to please the critics and balletomanes, Serge Lifar must be very difficult with himself as to the subject and with the music of his new creations.

I should like to say that the principal dancers : Yvette Chauvire in the role of Leucothea, Madeleine Lafont as Surysthee, Michel Renault as Nauteos and Pax Bozzoni as Pisandre were doing their best to give life to this ballet in which Yvette Chauvire showed her splendid qualities of mime, and perfect dancing. I can say, without making a "jeux de mots" that she saved the boat from complete wreckage !

And to close this difficult task, I shall repeat that the most famous painters have not always painted "masterpieces" and "errare humane est". which old latin sentence I take for myself in this case !



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BACKSTAGE WITH DE BASIL

By Louis Golding

critics of the ballet were here, huddled in the wings, the dancers waiting for the cues among the electric cables and canvas frames. I saw them in the vasty darkness behind the back-cloth practising the manoeuvres which they were shortly to execute in the convergence of the limelights and the lorgnettes and the myriad bemused eyes.

They looked like poets communing with their own souls, those young dancing men and women with none but themselves for their audience, as they launched into the *fouette*, revolving upon the toes of one foot, while the other foot pursued as with a whip that whirling teetotum ; or they elevated themselves into the *entrechat*, their two lifted feet twinkling like stars. Or perhaps at most, a relative might be looking on, one of those sixteen mothers, two fathers, two or three sisters and sisters-in-law, whom Colonel de Basil transported so genially and tactfully from continent to continent.

ENIGMATIC

Or perhaps it might be Colonel de Basil himself looking on, that most paradoxical and enigmatic of directors. There, among the properties for the last night's or tomorrow's ballets, a personality barely second in significance to Diaghilev himself in the history of twentieth-century ballet—there he stood, tall, be-spectacled, fair hair brushed back from a broad Caucasian forehead. A Kossack, the son of a Kossack soldier, he commanded a detachment of Kuban Kossacks during that other War. It is easy to believe that his experience in the manipulation of creatures so fiery, so strenuous and so incalculable, must have been very valuable indeed, during his later and not less rigorous career, for dancers have exactly those qualities, especially the last.

Though he was a successor where Diaghilev was an innovator, his task had in some ways been more difficult. Diaghilev organised his ballet in a wealthy world, ready to disgorge thousands of pounds to gratify his least whim. De Basil had the world-wide lethargy of a slump to combat. Diaghilev had the incomparable talent of the official Russian academies to draw upon. De Basil had to wander about folornly among the dancing schools of Paris, before he could find his Baronova, his Riabouchinska, his Toumanova, his Baby Trio, aged sixteen, seventeen and sixteen, who, with the assistance of the gracious Danilova, inherited from the last days of the Diaghilev ballet, bade fair, during that first season, to bring again the dazzling heyday of pre-war St. Petersburg.

BARONOVA

There, in fact, was Baronova, waiting to make that exquisite entrance with her lover in Presages, which was to me, and is still, the loveliest single moment in the recent history of ballet. Three times she crossed herself, like a pious little girl going into church in some remote Russian village. Then she moved upon the stage, her toes seeming only to caress the boards beneath her. Despite her humour, which was quite infectious (you should have seen her smiling her sweet way along the banks of *Le Beau Danube*) she was the least earthy of those three baby ladies. If she had mundane attachments it was to the Micky Mouse, the Charlie Chaplin, the Teddy Bear, the sleek and furry and woolly toys she had heaped up in her dressing-room.

RIABOUCHINSKA

And now Riabouchinska in her blue costume darted along the wings on to the stage, exactly as a kingfisher darts in the gloomy lee of a river-bank out into a pool's open sunlight. She was the daugher of patrician parents, and there was authority and breeding from her profile to her pearl-like finger-tips. A moment later both she and Baronova were back again in the immense cavern of back-stage, pursuing each other like two dragon flies. Small cries of excitement went up from the corps de ballet resting a moment among painted mounds of canvas and papier-mache. Hush ! Hush ! called Grigoriev, the regisseur, benign tyrant of the company. The girls drooped their heads like children caught out being naughty during a church-service.

They were doing *The Three-Cornered Hat* now. This was the dance of Massine, immortal conceiver and executer of ballets ; it was the dance also of Toumanova, with the black hair smooth as a seal and eyes like damson-plums. The child entered into the spirit of this Spanish fantasy with the bravura of Argentina herself, the greatest of Spanish dancers. She exceeded herself that night. The other girls crowded round her as she came into the wings again, and paid a tribute to her more authoritative than all the mountainy bouquets.

A far-gathered crowd they were, those girls. They came from Russia, of course, from Denmark, Poland, Armenia, Georgia, Czecho-Slovakia. They came from Japan by way of Chicago. They came from England, too, which had by that time become a notable nursery of ballet. But whatever the land of their origin, this art which is in itself a fusion of arts, made them the spiritual nationals of one country—Russia, its hearth-stone.

PICASSO

The painters, Bakst or Picasso, provided them with streets to talk in and trees to dance under. The musicians, Brahms or Strawinski, provided them with the bird-song or wind-song which were heard in their atmosphere. They themselves ceased to be individuals. They became threads in a tapestry, notes in a symphony, as they danced on the stage there, where the limelights met.

And then they hurtled like thunderbolts or faded like flowers, out into the wings again. And each of them solemnly took up again the long task of self-perfection, pirouetting, leaping, twisting forward, sideways. The task that later dancers have taken on again. The task—thank the Lord, that will never be completed.

Yes, yes, it was a noble night—backstage with De Basil.

Aisle

A COMMENTARY ON

WHILE thinking of salaries in the Wells companies, it is as well to remember that the leading dancers are also drastically underpaid. At Covent Garden many opera singers earn two and three times the salaries of the ballerinas when on guest appearances. The salaries of our leading dancers expected to keep up heavy overheads—are almost unbelievably inadequate. One, for instance, earns exactly thirty shillings more than a machine oilman on a daily newspaper printing press !

One dancer rang to tell me that Atticus in the *Sunday Times* was "writing almost like a Craig-Raymond". The theme, of course, was the Sadlers Wells Theatre dispute. I quote :

"THE dispute between Equity and the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet is not one on which I should venture to express an opinion ; and it is, of course, in many ways an admirable thing that the Sadler's Wells Ballet should have fought through from its precarious beginnings and achieved much of the prestige, much of the solidity, and (if rumour be correct) much of the discipline of the Brigade of Guards.

And yet—particularly now that the parent company is to present a programme of Diaghilev ballets —certain veteran followers and Old Contemptibles of English ballet may perhaps be allowed to deplore the pro-consular tone of the Sadler's Wells spokesman who asserted on Wednesday that "Sadler's Wells is an institution. There can be no comparison with conditions in independent companies."

"Institution" is a cautious' conservative, backward-looking word. If it fits what goes on in the councils of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, more's the pity. It was not by craving the status of an institution that **Diaghilev** created, year after year, the ballets on which other companies are now happy to batten."

EXCELLENT. A fine statement made just at the time it was most needed. It is interesting that it was the "conservative" *Sunday Times* which made this statement, and not the brighter *Sundays* which might well have up-played the dispute. One did ring me to suggest my writing a human interest feature with a few shots of corps dancers cooking sausages or washing their clothes and looking miserably poor. I think Atticus clearly wrote what I would have written myself. I turned down the "human interest" offer.

I CAN answer—exclusively the question I posed here recently Who will play Festival Hall while Anton Dolin's Festival Ballet is in the United States

I heard that the Helsinki Royal Opera Ballet will appear with **Hilkka Hynnimen, Uuno Onikinen, Elsa Sylvestersson, Irina Hudova, Jaakko Latti and Maj-Lis Rajala.** In the company's repertoire are *Las Silfides*, *El Lago de los Cisnes*, *Paso a Cuatro* (*Pas de Quatre*), *Giselle*, *Fantasia Finlandesa* and the rarely seen *Raymonde*, and the 1892 Mariinski ballet, *Cascanueces* I offer no rewards for the translation of these titles ! But the first three letters of the last title are the operative ones.

BALLET in an unexpected place crops up again this month. Many readers may have been surprised to find a two minute ballet film showing in their local cinema programme. It advertises **D. H. Evans**, the London store. Supervised by **Jean Babilee**, it was made by **Dimitri de Grunwald** using dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet. A shot from the colour film is reproduced on this page.

IN London last month was the artistic director of a new group of dancers forming in Bristol. They call themselves the West Country Ballet and their basic idea is to produce ballet making some use of traditional English roots, and to implement the need for decentralized, provincial ballet which BALLET TODAY has been demanding.

Frances Crossley, the artistic director, has shown me the outlines of the group's first proposed ballets and I think they have an idea well worth the realization. I will have more to say on this next month, meanwhile readers in the west country should take an active interest in the group

With this as a start, can we see a second and third provincial company ?

SOME fifty thousand dollars are now necessary if the Winnipeg Ballet is to become an active company again This is the total made by adding last season's deficit to the loss sustained from the June fire. An appeal has been launched and the strong, recent Canadian interest in the dance should ensure some measure of response.

Istvan Rabovsky, Anton Dolin, Tamara Toumanova, John Gilpin and Nora Kovach taken on the evening of Toumanova's arrival in London when she watched Kovach as Esmeralda. (Photo : Raphael).

Figures and Sizes ? The Paris Opera Ballet dancers made an advertising short film which is currently being shown. Story on this page.

IN writing a merely Grecian draped biography of **Isadora Duncan** and publishing it as a fictional tale, **Sewell Stokes** shows sense. I doubt if the name of **Isadora** would stir much interest today, unless published in some unexpurgated form.

This study of an aged priestess of all-girls-together dancing is not saved by the implication that the heroine believes in some Free, Flowing Beauty.

Yet the author has made a highly entertaining book of it and I read it with some pleasure. He goes so far as to admit his heroine's identification with **Isadora**, but cloaks her as one **"Sarah Menken"**—surely too close to the name of a contemporary operatic singer ?

The references include calling **Diaghilev** a faker and a cool mention of the fact that her dancing had "nothing to do with the Russian style of ballet".

I thoroughly recommend the book—*Recital In Paris* (Peter Davies, 10/6)—for light reading. I was left with only one question : what would **Mr. Stokes** make of **Martha Graham** ?

THE activity in Spanish dance seems to have increased recently. I hear that the Juan Tena Ballet, first reviewed in BALLET TODAY by **Pilar Llorens**, may soon come to London. **Mr. Peter**

seat

THE BALLET MONTH

Daubeny showing his clever hand again ? I also hear that **Daubeny** is planning another Iberian peninsula visitor.

From the Pilar Lopez company —two defections. **Manola Vargas** and **Roberto Ximenez** have left the company to form their own group. Why ? I hope to have the answer for you next month.

MARGOT FONTEYN, long promised to **Korda** for a British film, is to star in a movie to be produced in Yugoslavia. The title I have is *The man in Her Life* and it is set for production next March in Belgrade, with exteriors on the Adriatic coast. The whole theme of the film is balletic.

A BIOGRAPHY of **Borodin** is being written for publication next year. Will anyone interested enough to recall books, articles, letters or any other relevant material please write to the author, c/o BALLET TODAY. Address, please, to "Borodin Book". This is a long-needed volume and ballet is to be stressed, I believe.

I HAVE some news of **Gene Kelly's** long, long awaited no-dialogue film *Invitation to the Dance*. Like the other dance magazines we were met by blank walls at Metro for every enquiry. What was the delay ? When the release ?

My news is that **Fred Quimby,** executive in charge of Metro's cartoon animation studio, had the whole staff on cartooning **Kelly's** film. On September 20 normal work was resumed by **Quimby's** staff. This, I believe, means that the work on *Invitation* was at that time complete. Taking into account the release distribution setup in the United States I would say now that *Invitation to the Dance* will be premiered in New York during December. If guesses are in order I would say the film will open at an art house, and not at the Roxy or Radio City as both of these houses are now full until after Christmas.

My only worry is why any film should require this much deductive effort !

ALTHOUGH the mentions of ballet are just that, mentions, I cannot but write of **Elena Gerhardt's** irresistible autobiography *Recital* just published by **Methuen** This great Lieder singer shared a platform with **Anna Pavlowa,** shared Moscow's tributes with the Imperial ballet. But, these paragraphs apart, here is an artist's story which vaults the bounds of her own art. It is the only book I have received by the morning mail and finished on the same day—the only one in a long, long time. Is it surprising that, as I still read it late into the evening, my accompaniment should have been **Schubert, Wolf, Schumann, Brahms** ?

IN signing **Mary Munro** for the remainder of the London season, the Manchester visit and the American tour, Festival Ballet has strengthened an already powerful company. With **Toumanova, Verdy, Munro** and **Kovach** as ballerinas the potential of the company is enormous. Given roles to exploit her qualities as a tragedienne, **Mary Munro** can be the most impressive dancer of our time.

BELINDA WRIGHT, who leaves Festival Ballet after the Manchester fortnight, will rejoin the company after the U.S. tour . . **Anton Dolin** has also announced his "farewell performance" in *Job* at Covent Garden next Summer . . . . . He will then restage *Giselle* for various companies and, of course, continue as artistic director of Festival . . . .

Beryl Grey returns to Sadlers Wells Ballet during November . . . **Samia Gamal,** Egyptian film dancer, joins the Cuevas ballet in Paris to dance a new pseudo-Oriental ballet at the Bernhardt Theatre . . . . . .

CONGRATULATIONS to **Daphne Dale** and **Nicolai Polajenko** upon their rapid engagement . . . . **Michael Kidd,** frequent film dance director, will drop the 'dance' part of his title when he makes a film for Metro early next year as director . . . . . **Liliane Montevecchi,** dynamic young Italian dancer whom London saw as the diamond cruncher with **Roland Petit** at the Stoll last year, will star with **Stewart Granger** in *Moonfleet* for Metro . . **Sutton** Ballet Club (Wallington 9228) promise an interesting winter programme as from the sixth of this month . . . . . .

THE **Nora Kovach and Istvan Rabovsky** story is to be serialized di the New York Times . . . the inrectors of the Moscow Imperial Theatre took exactly eight years before agreeing to a production of *Esmeralda,* to **Dargomijski's** music, in 1847 . . . . dance director **Jack Cole** is to work on a film here . . . . I must apologise for using **Sanzio's** spelling of his name rather than that used by the photographer in last month's credits—he is, of course, **Rafael,** not **Raphael** . . . . . .

MARY MARTIN is studying ballet . . . . *Wonderful Town* will open in London next February . . . *Can-Can,* the **Cole Porter** show, opens at the Coliseum on October 14 . . . . **Sonya Hana** of *The King and I* company has married S.W. Theatre Ballet's **Peter White** . . . .

A misprint in an American trade-paper has Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet corps earning 425 dollars a week . . . . Hurok-money ? . . . . . will the readers (three of them) who sent remittances for Ballerina Photographs, but no names or addresses, please write immediately. Please excuse short delays in these orders, by the way, the demand has been enormous . . . .

WILL **Belinda Wright** join the Marquis de Cuevas Ballet ? She has had the invitation . . . . . **Harald Lander** is likely to rejoin Festival Ballet next year, to mount Etudes . . . . .

Peter van Dijk, Yvette Chauvire and Violetta Elvin studying a score during a rehearsal at the Palm Beach Casino in Cannes where they appeared in a gala programme together with Boris Trailine, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Entente Cordiale. Chauvire danced the Dying Swan and, with van Dijk, the pas de deux from Lifar's Rondo Capriccioso. Elvin and Trailine danced the grand pas de deux from Casse. (Photo : Traverso, Cannes).

Daphne Dale, whose engagement to Nicolai Polajenko was announced last month. (Photo : Rafael).

Festival Ballet ballerina, Natalie Krassovska, looking wonderfully well after her apendectomy. (Photo : Rafael).

Digest History of Ballet

A CONCISE HISTORY

JAY NORMAN

PART ONE

DANCING is spontaneous and nearly as old as the history of man. Ballet as we know it is comparatively modern and necessarily artificial. For the purpose of this condensed historical survey, ballet is a series of solo or group dances arranged to express an idea or to tell a story, set to music and presented in a theatre with the aid of costumes and scenery.

Ballet in the above sense can be said to have originated in Italy in the late 15th century in mummings, masquerades and interludes. A famous interlude was a dinner ballet given in 1489 by Bergonzio di Botta of Tortona, on the occasion of the marriage of Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, with Isabella of Aragon, and took the form of a feast at which the dishes were presented with great ceremony and with appropriate and magnificent dances. These ballets became extremely popular throughout the courts of Europe and the fashion was introduced into France by Catherine de Medici (1519-1589). One of the most important spectacles arranged during this period was the 'Ballet Comique de la Reine' by Belgiojoso, celebrating the betrothal of the Duc de Joyeuse and Marguerite de Loraine. The first printed record of a ballet described this as 'a geometrical mixture of many persons dancing together to the harmony of several instruments'. Court dances of the time were described by Arbeau in his book : 'Orchesographie' (1588). These included the Pavane, Courante, Gaillarde, Gavotte, Tordion and Branles.

In 16th century England, ballet took the form of the masque, but it was not until the reign of James I that it rose to considerable heights in the hands of such authors, composers and designers as Ben Jonson, Purcell and Inigo Jones.

During the reign of Henry IV of France (1589-1610) ballets became more informal, consisting, of divertissements, then called 'entrees' by costumed and masked dancers representing the elements, sharply defined human characters, and so on, culminating in a Grand Ballet by noblemen or ladies, in similar and elaborate costumes, who performed a set of dances. No ladies danced when the king took part.

"Costumes were cumbersome"

Under the influence of Louis XIV (1643-1715) the ballets became more aristocratic and gracious. Music was composed by such men as Lulli, and Moliere wrote many comedy ballets. Louis established the Academie Royale de Danse in 1661 and the Academie Royale de Musique in 1669. A school of dancing was added to the latter in 1672.

Ballet was now transferred from the court to the public theatre. Themes of these ballets, or opera-ballets, were drawn from Greek and Roman mythology. By this time a permanent stage was an accepted part of a theatre and use was made of stage machinery. Scenery was spacious and architecturally magnificent. All the dancers were men and, as in the Shakespearean theatre in England, women's roles were taken by men, wearing masks

The first premiere danseuse was a Mlle Lafontaine, a member of the Academie de Musique, who appeared with court ladies in a ballet composed by Lulli : *Le Triomphe de L'Armour* in 1681. Other dancers of this period included Marie Subligny and Francoise Prevost. Among the danseurs were Blondi and Ballon. Male costumes for the Noble style were modelled on the 17th cetury's idea of military dress of ancient Rome ; female costumes had tight bodices and long, full skirts. The cumbersome costumes made terre-a-terre steps essential and the choreography concentrated on horizontal patterns. In this reign, Pierre Beauchamps, choreographer and dancing master to the king, laid down the five positions of the feet and many new terms were added to the vocabulary of dancing, including 'battement', 'entrechat' and 'pirouette'. A definite technique was beginning to emerge

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THE FOURTH IN AN EXCLUSIVE SERIES

ULANOVA'S FIRST ROLE

DISCRIBED BY BALLERINA KREMSHEVSKAYA

THE Fountain of Bakhchisarai, a ballet based on Pushkin's poem of the same name, had its premiere in the Leningrad Theatre almost 20 years ago.

The romantic legend about the "fountain of tears" built by Khan Girei in memory of his youthful captive appealed to the imagination of the authors of this production : N. Volkov, the libretto writer, B. Asafyev, the composer, V. Khodasevich, the designer, and R. Zakharov, the ballet master.

FAITHFUL

Asafyev's symphonic music for this ballet is distinguished by its faithful and vivid pictures of the characters.

Zakharov's first major production *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* brought out his specific abilities as a producer : his ability to single out the most important element in the play, to accentuate the climax, to enable the actor to grasp and express the idea of the production through the medium of the dance.

Act 1 pictures a celebration at the home of a Polish Magnate. The interesting Polish dances, lively crowds of guests and the merriment prevailing on the stage serves as it were, as a prelude which enables the ballet master to lead up to the contrast in the climax—the Tartar invasion. Within a second the stage is invaded by Tartar hordes. Using tympanic instruments only, the orchestra recreates the din of the battle, and the theatre echoes with the rattle of arms and the thud of boots . . . . . .

WONDER

Waclaw, Marie's betrothed, tries to save her. But at that moment Khan Girei appears. A swift, well aimed blow, and the young man drops dead at the feet of the conqueror. Girei tears the scarf off Maria's head and stops in wonder, held spellbound by her beauty.

Act 2 is laid in Girei's harem at Bakhchisarai. Girei's roving glance betrays to Zarema, the khan's wife, the truth : she has a rival in the palace who is ruining her love, her happiness.

CAPTIVE

Act 3 is the climax in the production. Girei appears in Maria's chamber. He casts his heart, his wealth, his love, feelings he had never known, at the feet of his captive. And, as if fearing to touch the pure vision, he leaves her. Left alone, Maria lets her memory wander through the past, until she falls asleep.

Forecasting tragedy, the melody of the cello attends the appearance of Zarema. The choreographic dialogue between Maria and Zarema is one of the major achievements of the ballet master. With a soft pussy-footing step Zarema leaps over the sleeping servant. There is the despair of the forsaken wife, tears over her irrevocably lost happiness, the pleas and threats of Zarema ; Maria's fear is succeeded by astonishment, and then by pity and compassion for the deep grief she cannot understand —these are just a few nuances characteristic of the pas de deux created by Zakharov and the dancers.

SKILLFUL

Roused from her sleep, the servant runs for Girei. With a skilful movement Zarema breaks away from Girei, rushes towards Maria and stabs her in the back.

As the melody in the orchestra fades away sorrowfully, Maria, holding on to the column, sinks slowly to the ground. Her life passes away with every tact of the music. The final tremble of the fine hand. A muffled chord and then a pause. Girei turns sharply towards Zarema, and she turns to face him. They stand face to face. Zarema awaits her death with the light of happiness in her face. But Girei denies that to her. She must die at the hand of the executioner.

In the fourth and final act, Girei bows before the fountain of tears. In the transparent stream he sees the radiant face of Maria.

RIGHTFUL

The birth of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* is associated with the names of actors who have become rightful co-authors of the production. Maria was the first role created specially for Galina Ulanova, taking into account her specific features. Ulanova has been improving this role from year to year. As she sank into her role, numerous finer details brought her closer and closer to Pushkin's Maria. And to readers of Pushkin's poem, who had seen this ballet, it is impossible to imagine anyone other than Ulanova as Maria.

The first performers of the role of Zarema were T. Vechaeslova and O. Iordan. They have a worthy successor in Alla Shelest.

A New Sleeping Beauty

A NEW *Sleeping Beauty* by H. W. Henze according to the Tchaikowski score was premiered in Essen. From the classical point of view it may be regarded as fatal to replace one ballet by another. With some changes in the libretto Henze could easily have made a composition of his own, withdrawing the choreographical tradition which is generally ignored in Germany from lack of knowledge.

Conductor Paul Belker tried in a very clever musical manner to keep to Tchaikowski's original and to put some fire into Henze's dry effort where the original melody could still be detected. Out of the four scenes Bortoluzzi produced a pleasant dance-drama deriving its real impetus from Tchaikowski's swinging melodies

The wicked fairy was well chosen for Lisa Ganschow while Irmel Lange provided the light shadow for her. In the second part of the evening Tragner, Volk and Doege created the atmosphere of the ballet *Joan von Zarissa* by Werner Egk.

Andrei Jerschik choreographed the Nutcracker Suite and Gluck's Don Juan. In both ballets Marion Iguchyuks is presented as the main attraction.

Lola Rogge choreographed the scenic arrangement in St. Katherine's. She created twenty-four different dances in which death tracks down, fights and overcomes his victims. Ragna Bove danced this role with precision. The chorus showed, as on an old frieze, a different kind of death for each of twenty-four figures driving, leading or drawing on their victims with violins or flutes. Winging death, shackled by Satan running through the town in a whirlwind of lighting and noise. The last scene brings an expression of hope of resurrection for the town.

Handel's oratorium *Saul* was performed by Mary Wigman to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the Manheim Theatre. Mary Wigman's ability to lead choruses to incarnate the music in movements, to translate them into action, is well known.

Strained discipline came to the fore. The entry of the warriors was fascinating in its staccato, and the despairing lament of the people of Israel after the defeat and death of Saul was well done.

EVA BULOW

"The first book on ballet's most controversial star" THE SPHERE . . . . . "The best buy among new books" DANCE NEWS . . . . "Peter Craig-Raymond, clever young editor of BALLET TODAY has written a book about ballet genius Roland Petit. Worth getting" SHOW BUSINESS . . . . . "Avoiding the pretty, pseudo-aestheticisms which so often vulgarise ballet notices an individual style" THE COMET . . . . . "Ballet fans—read" EVENING NEWS . . . . ." "It's the first book about this famous figure of the dance" WHAT'S ON . . . . "A la suite du tres grand interet souleve" TOUTE LA DANSE . . . . "A beautifully illustrated book" EXPORT BULLETIN . . . . . "the voice of young ballet" HEIRESS . . . . . "the spice and verve of Petit are captured well and, with scores of first-class photographs, Roland Petit is my 'best bet' and terrific value. If you want someone to argue with, to shout back at and to keep you reading until the last personal opinion has been read, this is the book and Craig-Raymond the writer" the Editor of DANCE NEWS . . . . "In a brief biographical notice the author is described as the youngest and most prolific of the well-known dance writers. This may be so but neither his grammar nor his spelling are quite on a level with the work of those of whom he claims to be a contemporary" DANCING TIMES . . . . "Der band ist reich und zum Teil gut illustriert" DAZ TANZARCHIV . . . . "Written by one of London's most prolific young dance critics should prove of especial interest to anyone who is in the least interested in ballet. An interesting evaluation by a writer who is not afraid to set down what he thinks" the Editor of DANCING STAR, Gordon Keith . . . . . "exciting, effective" BOOKSELLER . . . . and reviewed in VARIETY, THE STAGE, NEW STATEMAN and in many other newspapers and magazines.

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Antonio Dances Dream Sequence in New Film

CONCHITA PIQUER and her Company are back in Barcelona, after a successful tour around Spain, but this time they are dissolving the company to allow its members to have a rest. Next autumn they will start to work again and leave for South America where they have a chain of contracts to fulfil.

Something has already been said about them in BALLET TODAY and it is my intention now to point out one side of their programme. The outstanding dancing of Alejandro Vega—formerly one of Pilar Lopez's partners—and Elena de Montevar.

STANDARD

He has a strong stage personality and his dancing is of such high standard as only one who has been near Pilar for seven years could acquire. Very few Spanish dancers nowadays resist the temptation of impressing the public with easy tricks which satisfy audiences with a limited knowledge on the subject. But to dance to a demanding, critical audience and to make a success of it, it is not an easy task. And that is what makes Vega a real dancer.

Having built his own style he keeps to it, no matter the place or audience he is dancing to. Their numbers or solos are by far the best in the show. *Suspiro andaluz* a solo by Elena de Montevar. *Panolito de novia* by Alejandro Vega, and *El bichito de los celos* a flamenco dance by both, are among the most outstanding. The last one ranks as high as any in the best Spanish companies, it is authentic and it is so wonderfully danced.

ANTONIO FILM

Antonio dances and acts in the film *Todo es posible en Granada* with Francisco Rabal and Merle Oberon. He has made a short ballet film in colour which has been included as a dream in the black and white film.

The dancing is entertaining, but the colour is not very good. There are some shots of him in the actual film which show the perfection of his dancing at his best, especially in a close up of his feet. One really enjoys it even though it is so short.

Juna Tena's Ballet Company has been engaged by the Government to take part in the Festivals of Music and Dramatic Art, now taking place all over the country. The first performances were in Asturias and in October they will appear in the International Festival of Dancing in Barcelona.

New works are being produced for these occasions. *The Wonderful Mandarin* to Bela Bartok's music, which has had Paul Szilard as choreographer, of the Arts School in New York. But the most interesting work is *Suite*, music by Juan Hidalgo, a promising Spanish composer, now living in Paris, and for which Juan Tena has created a very strong and attractive choreography. The costumes are by Ginovart.

NEW TALENTS

Two more ballets are being prepared, *Alfonso X* music by Padros, and *Gomintok*.

Juan Tena is collaborating with many new talents and is trying to show that the younger generation also has much to say and to offer in art and in ballet.

His company is just beginning to take form and all its components aim to be able to express what Spanish audiences seek for in ballet. That fact has been appreciated by the critics who say that this group of dancers has started by far the most interesting movement in ballet in Spain for many years.

—PILAR LLORENS

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Toni and Harald Lander

IT IS difficult to be a ballet master. It is probably, in a sense, even more difficult to be a ballerina and the wife of a ballet master. Indeed Toni, with a twinkle in her eye and a warm smile for her husband, put it even more forcibly. "It is very difficult and perhaps much better not to be the wife of the ballet master." Yet Harald and Toni Lander have achieved success in both these roles. Distinguished success. But they have done something more, they have remained delightful people. Both have a quality of relaxed attention. Attention of this order is creative. It is a sure sign of disciplined imaginative strength. It is also both charming and disarming.

Harald Lander joined the Royal Danish Ballet in 1913. His influence there as a choreographer, as ballet master, and as a loving guardian of the Bournonville tradition, was in large measure responsible for that company's maturation. That, since he left in 1951 to become maitre de ballet of the Paris Opera, there has been no further Danish advance speaks for itself. We saw, when the Paris Opera came to Covent Garden in September, that Paris gained what Copenhagen lost. Of this I was confident.

NAPOLI

Before then, London audiences had seen the Festival Ballet in Harald Lander's shortened version of Bournonville's great ballet *Napoli*. Not simply the last act. "You cannot have half a man. It is pointless. Cut a ballet into two and the same thing happens. So with *Napoli*—I have taken something from each of the acts. I hope I have made a whole."

When I asked Mr. Lander how he liked rehearsing with the Festival Ballet, his answer was immediate and warm. "It is good to work with them. They love their work, they are young, and because they work so enthusiastically it has been possible for me to put on *Napoli* in so short a time."

Toni danced *Teresina* (Anita Landa was also to dance this role with another partner) to Briansky's Gennaro. We had already admired her dancing in *Swan Lake* and *Les Sylphides* but I believe that in Bournonville's ballet she excelled herself. "'Do you like dancing in London?' I asked her. "Yes, I do. It is good to dance in London because the audience knows about ballet."

Respect for the audience is that which distinguishes the artist from the showman. On audiences in general, Mr. Lander had this to say—"It is the audience who accept, or reject, a ballet. You can always learn from the audience. What matters is how *they* feel, not what I feel, about a ballet. An artist of course must go his own way, it is wrong to court the audience. But, since he is a human being, their approval gives him strength.

HIDE

What he feels about Bournonville he does not hide. "To me I cannot love him more than if he were my own grandfather. When I was young I didn't understand his work. It was Madame Volborg Borchsenius, who was still there at the Danish Ballet when I was a student, who explained his importance to me. When she was a little girl Bournonville was still living. He is *still* living—in his work he is not dead. He came alive to me. I simply adored him. As an author of ballets he was a son of his own time. As a choreographer he is still an active force. His was a great talent : as a choreographer, as an author of ballets, and as a dancer."

With a passion for reading history and drinking good coffee, Harald Lander is the author of an immense number of ballets. As well as dances for plays and operas by Goldoni, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Verdi, and Mozart. His ballet *Vaaren* (*Spring*), performed in Copenhagen in 1942, showed the triumph of Spring (the Spirit of Resistance) over the land-locked hold of Winter (the German Occupation). His musical choice has been wide. Riisager for *Qarrtsiluni*, Turina for *Morning*, *Midday*, *Evening*, Poulenc for Diana, and Czerny orchestrated by Riisager for his widely esteemed and lovely *Etude*. And at Covent Garden we saw his latest ballet *Printemps a Vienne* to Schubert's Second Symphony.

Toni with her fine features and long limbs, her good line and ample gestures, has all the felicities of a grand style ; and is a dancer, it seems to me, who should inspire a ballet to be specially composed. "What about it ?" I asked her husband. "I have already created a ballet for Toni, but we have not yet the opportunity to produce it. It is pure ballet. It is the Dance."

RIGHT

'It is the Dance' . . . How right this is for Toni who is, essentially, a dancer. Passing the close scrutiny of the ballet master at the age of eight, she joined the Royal Danish Ballet. At thirteen, in the corps de ballet of *Swan Lake*, "I remember how he found fault with this and with that. I remember going home and crying. Oh yes, I was afraid of him many times. But a ballet master must be strict. There must be discipline." To dance a ballet through once is scarcely enough for Toni. Immediately after each ballet "I always want to dance it through again. To dance it better. But then you see I love dancing."

A love of dancing is one thing, a quite fantastic memory for dance steps is another. Toni Lander has both. Her memory proved invaluable in rehearsals for *Napoli*. Harald Lander's attitude towards rehearsal is organic. And his method reveals unmistakably his creative wisdom in direction. He does not tell. He shows. At the first rehearsal he danced with spirit and with an infectious good humour, his back to the dancers. "I keep my back to you today," he told them, "I think it is better *you* see."

He believes that the inner preparatory work, forming a basis for a personal decision to reveal at one time only as much as can be absorbed,—is what counts. "But if a dancer asks what comes next. If a question is raised. You must always be ready with the answer. In that way confidence is born. Only if you have done enough work within yourself are you able to do this." In spite of this the ballet grows organically as well as to a plan. Before rehearsals are well under way to ask a choreographer about his ballet —"is like asking a mother of her unborn child 'what coloured eyes has he ?'."

ONE WORD

When I first saw Toni and Harald Lander I asked one of those questions with which journalists are infected. "Tell me in one word," I said, "what quality a ballet master needs most to have?"

He excused himself from answering this nonsense very graciously. But when I saw him some evenings later, after he had been working indefatiguably throughout the day, he caught me by the arm.

"That word," he said, "it is to *work*." In that word lies the man.

Interview by DANIEL YOUNG

BALLET AS I SEE IT

Leeway For Dancers

by Fernau Hall

IN the production of a play the fixing of the right tempo at each moment is of the highest importance : some of the most important effects are achieved by subtle variations of tempo within speeches, and it is largely by adjusting the average tempo of successive scenes that the producer makes the play build up in a convincing way to its climax.

Tempo is in fact so critical that if the stage director finds that an act takes as much as a minute more or less than it did at the opening, he knows that the performance is going to pieces, and calls a rehearsal to put things right.

In ballet, tempo is even more critical ; for the choreography is designed to make its effect at a certain speed, and even a minor change can cause the movements to lose all meaning. Here the responsibility for maintaining the right tempo is (or should be) divided between the conductor quality of the dances has been seriously affected.

Ernest Ansermet

and the maitre de ballet ; and it is indeed a heavy responsibility.

A certain amount of leeway must be allowed to dancers, for those with small neat bodies can be comfortable with tempi faster than those possible to larger dancers ; but if dancers are allowed to have their heads completely, they are likely to push the tempi gradually a long way from the correct ones, and it is only by the greatest vigilance that the maitre de ballet, in consultation with the conductor, can keep ballets up to standard in this respect.

Ever since the departure of Mary Skeaping, the tempi at Covent Garden have shown a regrettable tendency to drift away from the correct ones—usually in the direction of greater speed—and in many cases this has gone so far that the artistic

This is true of the pas-de-trois in both *Lac* and *The Sleeping Beauty* : these start at such a fast tempo that when the conductor speeds up in the coda the dancers have to put all their energy into keeping up with the music, and cannot give the steps their proper shape and quality.

Even more violent, and therefore more destructive, has been the speeding-up of the first variation of the Lilac Fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*.

This speed-up was introduced last year, at a time when Mary Drage took over the role, and may have been due to the fact that she found difficulty in performing the steps at the proper slow tempo ; but it then became the standard tempo, and even Beriosova (who had been giving superb performances in this role, making her movements noble, broad and fluid to the nth degree) was forced to take this dance at an allegro tempo which made nonsense of the steps.

The Sadlers Wells Ballet often shows this curious sort of inertia : when a change has been made with or without good reason—it then seems to become a hard-and-fast rule, and continues in force long after the conditions which suggested it in the first place have ceased to apply.

CONDUCTORS

It is more than likely that one reason for the drifting of the tempi at Covent Garden is that ever since Constant Lambert abandoned the podium, the Sadlers Wells Ballet has had no permanent conductor of the stature demanded by a position of such responsibility.

Under such conditions it is very difficult for a dancer to develop musicality. Margot Fonteyn was able to lay a solid foundation for her unique musicality while working under the inspiring musical direction of Constant Lambert, and now has such command of all aspects of music that she can and does give a clear lead to the conductor when he loses the tempo ; but this is something very different from the almost telepathic rapport which exists between a great dancer and a great ballet conductor, and there was no mistaking the "lift" she received when dancing the Firebird with Ansermet conducting.

In fact the whole company responded gratefully to his supple rhythms and perfectly balanced tone-colours, which did equal justice to Strawinski and Fokine—not to mention Diaghilev.

For me, the return to normal after Ansermet brought with it the same feeling of despondency as the return of a migraine headache after some hours of delightful clear-headedness.

BASQUE TECHNIQUE

DURING a talk with Philippe Oyhamburu, the highly intelligent Director of the Basque company "Etorki", I was delighted to find that he is just as interested in (and puzzled by) the origins of the Basque technique of dancing as I am. In fact the books on Basque dancing and folk-lore shed little light on this subject.

The similarities between Basque dancing and the classical ballet technique are very striking : in fact almost all the Basque steps have their balletic equivalent, and the Basque technique approximates closely to the ballet technique of 250 years ago.

But how much of the ballet technique (apart from the *pas de Basque*) has come from Basque dancing, and how much has Basque dancing been subject to counter-influences from ballet ? The prominence given to beats of various kinds in both techniques means nothing, for the *entrechat* was known in ancient Egypt, and beats are just as characteristic of English Morris dancing (which can be traced back to pre-Christian times) and Highland Scottish dancing as they are of Basque dancing.

A great deal of research in needed in all ancient European folk-dances and in the social dances from which the ballet technique emerged before we can speak with certitainty about problems such as this.

MAGNIFICENT FIREBIRD

—From Page Four

upon the hazy, almost vision-like appearances of the Firebird. Fonteyn, adding the role to her best, achieves a mischievous, confident Firebird. Superbly danced, her Firebird glows as the tree itself glows—a dull, rich, astral red.

Svetlana Beriosova danced the princess as an untouchable—virginal, removed. An asteroid to Fonteyn, she calms the stage with a serene detachement. I feel she should have a resplendent costume change for the finale, however, no matter what Fokine established as a tradition. And her main costume is not sufficiently distinctive, an ornamented centre-panel of white, mounted on white, is not conceivably the most theatrically effective means of showing her a princess.

Serge Grigoriev and Liubov Tchernicheva have recreated the production extremely well, John Sullivan's lighting is—exceptionally for this house—good, apart from a lack of top wings lighting for the day. But Gontcharova's decor is such that one could sit before it for an hour, drinking the deep atmosphere it retails. A most beautiful stage. When the whole trelliswork is backlit in red, when it is lurked in blues, when day comes to show the smoky bubblettes in the distance . . . . . all the changes rung on this set are effective.

There are only two disappointments, in fact. Frederick Ashton caricatures as Carabosse, rather than revising his technique for Kostchei. I must make this point although, taken without the comparison, his performance is excellent.

And Michael Somes.

SHALLOW

Somes all but wrecked the final tableau by completely ignoring the character of the prince and all but smirking as he led Beriosova. Not knowing Somes I cannot lay his lack of feeling at any definite door There is something tragically wrong with his whole bearing on stage—he marks his work rather than follows it through. Any lesser artist would surely be carpeted by the artistic direction for reading his character in as shallow a manner as Somes did the prince. In a dancer of his position it is a definite disservice to the company which can lose its grip on the audience's believability through such lighthearted irresponsibility.

I am sorry to end my notice of this great production on such a note. But it is unfair on a company which worked so hard to make Firebird a success—and unfair on the three co-principals—that Somes should, apparently, have done so little to perfect himself in the role.

diary

Paris Opera Ballet at Covent Garden

Sept. 28 *Variations, Les Mirages, Les Indes Galantes, Le Palais de Cristal*
29 *Grand Pas, Les Indes Galantes, Phedre, Printemps Vienne*
30 *Suit en Blanc, Prelude a L'Apres-Midi D'un Faune, Les Indes Galantes*
Oct. 1 *Entre Deux Rondes, Les Indes Galantes*
(No Mat) *Les Danses du Prince Igor, Etudes*
2 *Suite en Blanc, Icare, Les Indes Galantes, Les Dances du Prince Igor.*
4 *Le Palais de Cristal, Istar, Les Indes Galantes, Etudes*
5 *Nauteos, Entre deux Rondes, L'Oiseau de Feu, Printemps A Vienne*
6 *Grand Pas, Icare, Les Mirages, Etudes*
7 *Variations, Romeo et Juliette, Nauteos, Suite en Blanc*
8 *Le Palais de Cristal,*
(No Mat) *Guignol et Pandore, Istar, Printemps A Vienne*
9 *Les Mirages, Phedre, Suite en Blanc*
11 *Palais de Cristal, Etudes.*

End of Season

Yugoslav National Dancers

The Croat Ensemble for Folk Dance and Folk Song is to give a season at the Festival Hall. From October 3.

Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet : Tour

Sept. 27: *Glasgow Royal*
Oct. 4 : *Aberdeen His Majesty's*
11 : *Sheffield Lyceum*
18 : *Nottingham Royal*
25 : *Leeds Grand*
Nov. 1 : *No details*
8 : *B'ham Alexandra*

City Ballet at Toynbee Hall, E.C.

Every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday : changing programmes of new ballets under the direction of Philippe Perrottet and other dancers of the "Wedding in Paris" cast including Eileen Elton, Diana Payne, Harry Cordwell, Glen Gordon, Basil Patison and two others, Jeanne Artois and Jeanne Lusby. Each programme runs for thirty minutes.

(Photo: Rafael)

Through the Mirror to the Stars

Rene Bonn

NOT enough has been said about Rene Bon. This hard working, passionate dancer is to be praised and blamed—this being of fire and ice. Everything that is lacking in his flesh stimulates him and excites an almost inward ferociousness, which often gives way under his human weakness. His instinctive watch on himself saves him from the self pity that could put him into the category of the romantic hero.

His career has made rapid strides. In 1942 he was at the Opera Comique and in 1943 he was first out of seventeen entrants for the Opera contest and in the following year he was made principal dancer. Since then he has shown remarkable talent in every 'role' allotted to him. He has made a name for himself in *Le Jour, Suite En Blanc*, and the pathway is now clear.

He flung himself into his work with a determination of his own, and in 1948 he entered the Grand Ballet of Monte Carlo as principal dancer. We remember him in the following ballets : *Le Lac des Cygnes* (1948 England), *Spectre de la Rose* (1948 Rio de Janeiro).

As principal dancer in 1950—October—he left the Cuevas Company. Already his road has had varied changes.

With his great love of activity his dancing led him into the Ballets des Champs Elysees where he created the ballet *Jeu de Cartes*, and took the part of the hunchback in *Rendezvous*.

When Janine Charrat created her company she practically succeeded in retaining this star by giving him the role of the Cheval Blanc in *Massacre des Amazones*, also other important roles in *Danseuse d'Autre Fois—Suite Ravel-Debussy* and *Geste pour un Genie*. It is hardly necessary to say that he created, with Massine, *Laudes Evangelii* at Perouse.

Capturing this forthcoming star was no easy thing. Nevertheless this star has consented to talk about the present dance season which has made him, as a choreographer, responsible for *Feu Rouge, Feu Vert* (idea by Bertrand Castelli) to music by Daniel Stirn.

TO CREATE

In his own words he says—"I wish to create, and it seems to me that the public are with me, and following my steps, and I must have a sufficiently fluid theme to enable me to hold my inspiration without hindrance." . . and now we are asking why have you adopted the Janine Charrat company ?

His reply is that Janine has a very wide scope with diversity of inspiration, a young mind and a profound taste for art. She has the freedom of her interpretations much more than I can ever hope for . . . . and what more do you want ?

Now I can only complete my work as a dancer and devote myself to the care and training of my body and also to perfecting the mind, both with regards to music, painting and everything that touches the art of dancing, near or far—in other words, all the arts.

The inhumanity of such an achievement does not seem to impress Rene Bon. His quick mind seems to mock at the impossible. We hope that the future will be successful and it is certain that, if the obstacles are purely tangible ones, he will win through.

JEAN COQUELLE

Overseas

BALLET TODAY now has the largest oversea sale of any British dance magazine, a sale which increases substantially every month.

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FROM PAGE ELEVEN

EDINBURGH

facial grimace—that is that. This is the first of a series on real-life, unrehearsed American films and the first one ever to document living jazz.

Ballet Girl is sentimental but moderately so. It concerns a little girl whom we meet just before her first stage appearance, recalling the events leading to her admission to the ballet school of the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen. From there, for 23 minutes, one is entranced with glimpses of classes, the theatre, soloists like Margarethe Schanne, Stanley Williams, Borge Ralov, Inge Sand and the ex-ballet master and choreographer to the theatre, Harald Lander, and not least, the amusing character sketches provided by the children competing in the entrance examination.

An apt commentary is spoken by Claire Bloom.

POSTSCRIPT

IT IS reassuring to learn that the sumptuous production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has cost 30 per cent less than it might have done, were it not for the clothes being executed in the Old Vic's wardrobe. This production, which goes from Edinburgh directo to U.S.A. and which artistic director Ian Hunter wishes to keep away from London, is certainly a rich spectacle. Headed by Shearer, Helpman and Holloway, filled up by ex-Wells and ex-Rambert dancers and some actors, the finest aesthetic angle is the music under Hugh Rignold.

The dances are charming, but provide small opportunities for either Shearer or the corps de ballet, and the most convincing character in this very difficult piece is Helpmann, an Oberon with the philosophic air of Roman Virgil rather than a fairy king in the woods of Athens.

SHEARER

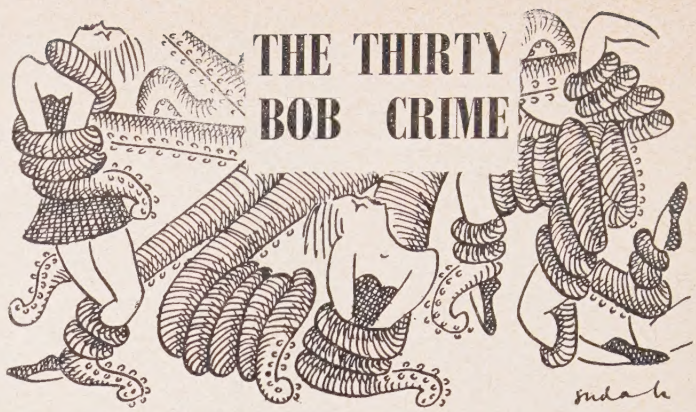
Holloway assured me that he thoroughly enjoys the part of Bottom and this I can believe, although he confesses that an air-conditioned mask with a copy of the script inside would have been an asset]

The role of Titania suits Shearer admirably, although her rendering of the verse makes little effect even on the first few rows of the stalls. Sol Horok, who is interested in 'the biggest and the best' seems confident of its American success.

Incidentally, Mr. Hunter did not want the Dream to go to London, as it would diminish the "exclusive" value of the Festival.

Susan Lester

THE THIRTY BOB CRIME



IF YOU are an artist, you have no right to behave like a common worker. The attitude of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet management was forthrightly that. The company, just returned from a financially successful tour of South Africa, demanded a thirty shilling all-round increase in wages for the winter season. The cost to the management would have been fortyfive pounds a week, inclusively.

But, as they made clear, it was not the £45 which was at stake. It was a principle. And, unbelievably perhaps, the principle was this : the management decides upon what wage should be paid ; the dancer accepts this wage. No more, just that.

Now we know that this attitude exists, the relevant thing is to find out how, in 1954, it can so exist. Basically the answer is simple, dancers are taught to dedicate themselves (not work), to live for their art (not eat) and to spend up to fourteen hours a day in the theatre for £7 a week to achieve an artistic success (not attract a paying public to the box-office).

What spoils this intriguingly mis-defined set of operative phrases is that the ballet—this company included—does draw a public. A large public. A paying public.

One executive was quoted as asking : "what would the children do with more money ?" The "children" are the dancers who have completed two of the most important ballet tours by English companies in the past year. Upon leaving the company recently, two of the "children" became principal dancers at Covent Garden. One, Svetlana Beriosova, to be rapidly hailed as a near-future prima ballerina.

Quick graduation from this kindergarten.

If the dancers were not to be regarded as workers (oh how the exotics loathe the word—and never equal it !) the management was soon to show a pretty customary hand. Customary, that is, a few decades ago.

With the backing of their trade union, Equity, the thirty-odd dancers refused to sign new contracts at the old wages. The management immediately cancelled the London season and issued two threats—(a) to replace the company by using the opera ; and (b) to cancel the long tour.

Incapable of recognising a bread-and-butter wage demand, the Sadler's Wells management was quick to spot the bread-and-butter 'point of least resistance' in the dancers.

What was the dancers' position ?

After two years with the company, some were still earning the national minimum of £7-a-week. In London seven pounds goes just a little less far than the not very far it goes in the provinces. For dancers, especially girls, it is doubly hard because they have added overheads which they must pay personally. Several dancers, after six years in the company, were earning £8 10s. Just five shillings a year increment !

Even given the increases demanded, the ballet dancers would still be earning less than a West-end chorus girl. The *Times* rapidly printed a management statement that Equity was attempting to judge of dance merit and of individual dancers. In the conversations I have had with the Equity officials I have found them solely (and sincerely, it seemed to me) out to judge current wages by current living costs. Not an uncommon yardstick in contemporary labour relations ?

Within a few years the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet has grown from a junior group to a popular, professional company often receiving better public and press reaction that the senior company at Covent Garden. This, maybe, is the trouble.

Few schoolma'ams like to see their charges grow up and become able to fend for themselves. In ballet such maturing is doubly dangerous. The children gradually learn the uses and needs of money, the possibility of answering back, the necessity of standing up.

Equity's trouble is with terms. They are used to their members being abused as "wrong". With Sadler's Wells they suddenly find their members are children—and their crime ? Delinquency.

"See Napoli And . . ."

I FIND it very hard to review Festival Ballet's new production of Napoli. Hard because it is, I think, the first ballet I have ever seen which has not one single factor in its favour. Unbelievably *Napoli* has become a series of divertissements, without pause, plot or point.

I find it incredible that Harald Lander can have taken what was, in the Royal Danish repertoire, a storyfull, excellent ballet and have made this bore out of it.

FIRST TIME

It is the first time in my experience that a digest has thrown out the bones and kept the fat. On the first night it seemed interminable, the curtain could have come down at any point throughout the ballet without the audience having realised an error.

Toni Lander and Oleg Briansky danced the supposedly principal roles, but even Briansky's powerful dancing could not save this most unimaginative ballet.

QUIRKS

I cannot believe that Anton Dolin, personally, is happy with some of the ballets which have come into his repertoire. With the immense experience he has behind him, and his insanitable energy now, the repertoire shows quirks of choice which cannot be his.

If he is being advised, he should throw out the advisers, make his own plans—and stay rigidly with them.

— WHO'S WHO IN BALLET — A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX OF LEADING DANCERS —

— PART SEVEN — IN BALLET today

P

Ethery Pagava. French dancer, born 1932. Has danced with Ballets des Champs-Elysees, Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo, Petit, etc. Recently starring in Paris at the Teatre d'Etoile.

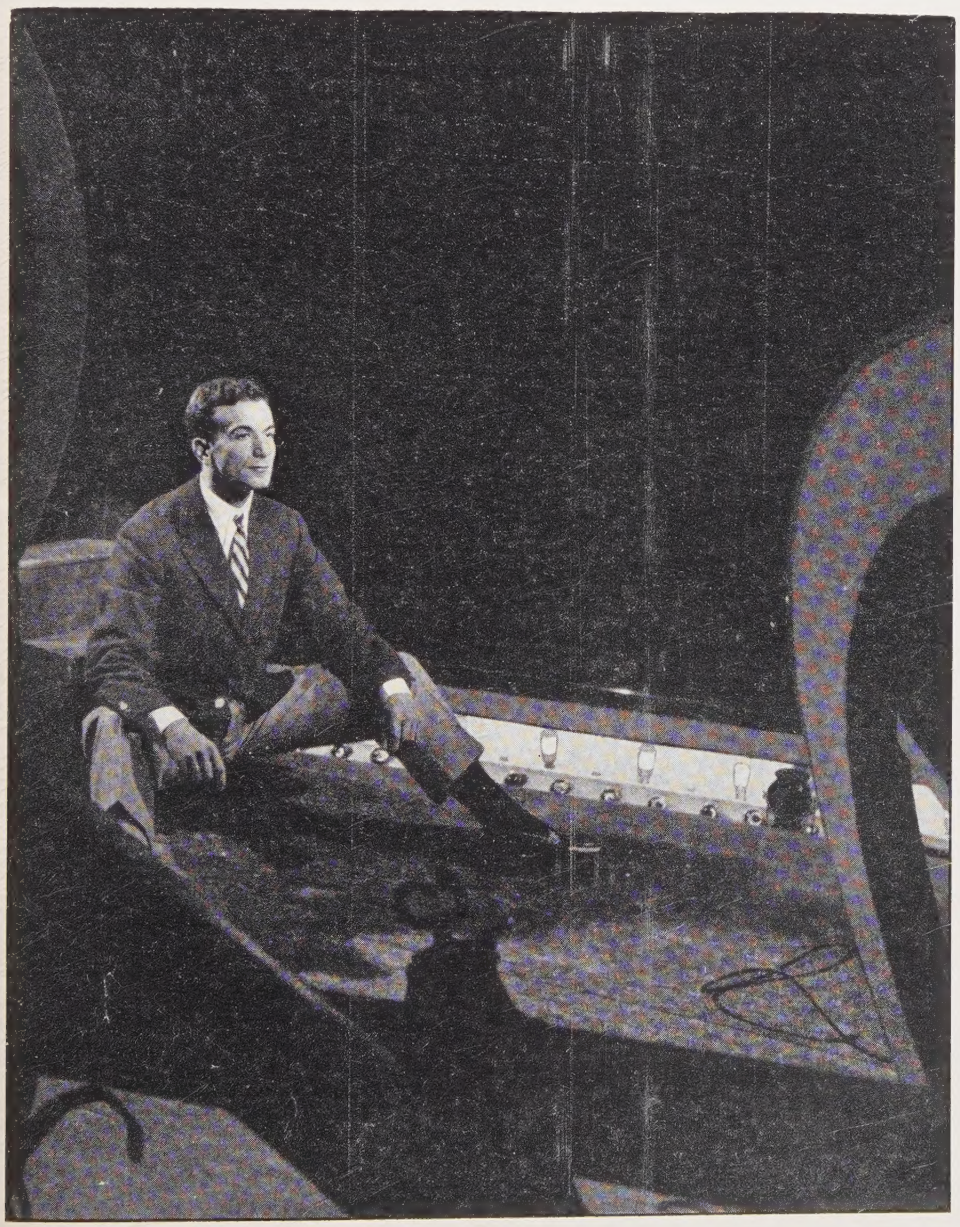
Ruth Page. American dancer turned choreographer, worked with Diaghilev, Pavlowa, etc. before joining Harald Kreutzberg and other modern dancers. Has staged ballets for various companies, including *Vilia* for Festival Ballet in London, 1953.

David Paltenghi. English dancer and a Rambert product before joining Sadlers Wells. Now known as choreographer in the theatre and cinema.

Roland Petit. French dancer born 1924, he studied at the Paris Opera, joining the ballet just previous to the 1939 war. After the war he found a sponsor for his Ballets des Champs-Elysees. Succeeding this company he formed Ballets de Paris which broke up in Hollywood. A second Ballets de Paris company was formed and appeared for two record-shattering seasons in London last year before extensively touring Europe and beginning an American tour which was cut short when Sol Hurok signed the company over to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to appear with Leslie Caron and Michael Wilding in *The Glass Slipper*. A number of the company are still in Hollywood with Petit who may stay for several more months.

Natalie Philippart. French dancer and wife of Jean Babilee. Mostly known for her performance, repeated at the Stoll recently, in *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*.

ROLAND PETIT



Nicolai Polajenko. American dancer most recently seen in London during the summer Festival Ballet season, which company he has joined.

David Poole. South African dancer born 1925, he came to London in 1947 and joined the Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet with which company he remains.

Pearl Primus. American Negro dancer specializing in ethnographic dance, stressed to racial propaganda themes. Last appearance in London was at the Princes Theatre. Her best-known work is to the Billie Holiday or Josh White sung *Strange Fruit*.

R

Tommy Rall. American dancer born 1929, he worked with Ballet Theatre, and other companies before coming to Hollywood.

Alexis Rassine. Russian dancer, has worked with Rambert, Anglo-Polish Ballet and is currently a long-time Sadlers Wells soloist.

Janet Reed. American dancer who worked in opera ballet and musicals before becoming a Ballet Theatre soloist, and joining N.Y. City Ballet.

Michel Renault. French dancer, joined the Opera ballet in 1941 becoming an Etoile in 1944. To be seen in London with the Paris Opera ballet. (BALLET TODAY cover, January this year).

Tatiana Riabouchinska. Russian dancer married to David Lichine and one of de Basil's "baby ballerinas". Riabouchinska has danced with almost every major company and recently starred with her husband's ill-fated Ballet de Ville los Angeles.

Jerome Robbins. American dancer turned choreographer. Worked with Ballet Theatre, N.Y. City Ballet and currently choreographs Broadway musicals and major Hollywood films.

Rosario (Rosario Perez). Spanish dancer, born 1920, who became famous as Antonio's partner. Rosario now heads her own company with a new partner.

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BALLET TODAY is published from 15 Upper Brighton Road, Surbiton, by I. E. Herf Tel.: ELMBRIDGE 9743. Printed by Richard Madley Ltd., 54 Grafton Way, W.1, England. Subscription rate : 15/- one year. U.S.A. $2.50. SOLE AGENTS : Australasia—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd. South Africa—Central News Agency Ltd. Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland—Kingstons Ltd. Spanish subscriptions to : Libreria J. Villegas, Preciados 33, Madrid. Sole Agents for Italy : Intercontinental, Piazza Sempione 8, Milano. German subscriptions to : Presse-Vertriebs-Gesellschaft M.B.H., Frankfurt a-Main, Mainzer Landstr. 225/227. ALL UNSIGNED MATERIAL IN BALLET TODAY IS BY THE EDITOR WHOSE OPINION IS NOT, OF NECESSITY, REFLECTED IN SIGNED CONTRIBUTIONS BY OTHER WRITERS.